"Give Me Your Hand and I'll Teach You How To Build": Travelling Practices of Participation in Housing, from Albania to the UK

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"Give Me Your Hand and I'll Teach You How To Build": Travelling Practices of Participation in Housing, from Albania to the UK

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Abstract

In this thesis two stories of participation in housing entwine across space and time. The first involves a migrant community living in an informal, self-constructed neighbourhood called Bathore on the outskirts of Tiranë, Albania, who benefitted from a participatory upgrading programme with a local planning NGO, from 1995-2005. The second involves a group of individuals in housing need who built a prototype house in collaboration with the researcher, entitled 'Protohome', which was temporarily sited and open to the public in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, in 2016.

The aim of this research is to locate and test alternative approaches to housing informed by, and embedded in, the conditions of the contemporary UK context: austerity, welfare cuts and caps, rising homelessness, housing precarity and the residualisation of social housing. The research is not simply a design exercise, but seeks approaches to housing which are collaborative, participatory and socially sustainable and which have learning and transformational potential for those in housing need at their centre. Consequently, the research translates learning from Bathore, where the practices and experiences of housing have been formed through conditions of protracted scarcity. Through a critical examination of the settling and house-building process, as well as the participatory strategies used in the upgrading programme, the objective of this research is to mobilise learning from Bathore for the Protohome project.

In doing so, the research draws from post-colonial scholarship, and activates this through the philosophies and practices of Participatory Action Research. Within this translocal learning process, where knowledge is translated between seemingly different contexts, the research seeks to deconstruct preconceptions about who or where holds the 'authentic' knowledge with regards to urban

development and housing processes. As a result, in the stories presented here, of designing, building and collaborating, knowledge is deeply embedded in place, people and histories, yet this knowledge can be remapped and used to inform an entirely new context. The research thus moves between the particularities of place and more general observations. It is simultaneously located and dislocated. The translocal lens employed thus goes beyond comparison, it actively *tests* approaches from one location to the other.

Through this translocal learning process the research uncovers how participation in housing may operate as a tool for learning, capacity building and for the creation of new social networks. Yet this is not without the interplay of power. Furthermore this is set within an often obstructive institutional context and an increasingly punitive welfare state, which makes this story complicated and, at times, despondent. However, the research highlights that organised and politicised forms of participation in housing may open up routes for potentially marginalised people to 'speak to' and 'with' formal institutions of power. In the practical testing of housing approaches on a public-facing live build, the Protohome project not only grounds these conceptual ideas, but also offers an innovative approach to research methodology and dissemination through *praxis*, which has multi-scalar impacts. On the basis of findings, the thesis tentatively proposes an agenda for 'participatory housing', where housing is a route to learning as opposed to an economic product or mere bricks and mortar.

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Declarations

The material contained in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other institution. It is the sole work of the author who takes full responsibility for any errors contained.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"If you had the land I think people would pitch up tents rather than sleeping on the streets but you can't even pitch up a tent anywhere, it's got to be a campsite, you've got to have permission to use the land. I thought there was common land? What happened to common land for the common man? We should be able to build. A lot of people can build, given the skills. I can build. Given the land I can build my own house just by coming here."
(Interview with Randy, Protohome group member)

"No, I didn't buy the land. I just came and built the house there… People had the right to build… it was public land so people could build here."
(Interview with resident of Bathore)

In June 2011 I walked into the *Stalin Tekstil Kombinat*, a former textile factory in Tiranë, Albania (see Figure 1). I didn't know what I was looking for. Perhaps remnants of the communist industrial past, old machinery, a dry fountain, an empty pedestal. Instead what I found was people, shops, schools, streets and homes. Family by family people had taken over the factory, constructing homes in the rusting, rotting fabric of its walls - laying lino on the floors and wallpaper on the walls, refitting windows, filling cracks in brickwork, tapping electricity wires, hanging flower planters. I instantly forgot about the industrial past that I was there to photograph and which I had plans to recreate in oil paintings to show at my interim Master of Fine Art degree show. I forgot about the concrete skeletons, the rusting hulks of steel, the fetishism of the communist past, and put my foot firmly in the present, in the moment.

Figure 1: New homes built into the *Stalin Textile Factory,* Tiranë

I had never seen self-construction on this scale. I had never even heard of the term 'informal housing' until Colin, my supervisor-to-be, mentioned it to me in a pub in Durham in 2013. I scribbled it down hastily in my notebook and nodded, pretending that I knew what he was talking about. Whilst doing some more research into informal housing in Albania I came across a place called Bathore – a whole town lying on the outskirts of Tiranë that had been built from the ground up by migrants who had moved from the north of the country after Communism ended (see Figure 2). I found out that the community there had benefited from a participatory upgrading programme working with a local planning NGO, called Co-PLAN, from 1995-2005. The project involved the provision of physical infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water and sewerage, but it also involved the building of *social* infrastructure and trust between community members which was lacking in Bathore.

Being exposed first to the factory and then to Bathore changed how I thought about how cities should and could be designed and constructed. For many years I had been trying to *represent* urban social history through the flat, two-dimensional format of the painting. This never seemed good enough, and was one of the reasons why, after many years I stopped painting. I didn't just want to *represent* social relations in my work I actively wanted to *create* them through my art practice, by working *with* people in a participatory process of design and build. And so, during my Masters I started creating large scale architectural installations, and this physical act of building then translated into this research.

The self-built homes that I saw in Albania became a 'way in' for me to think about the connection between building practices and processes of social learning. Seeing these housing typologies unsettled my deeply embedded views about the design, construction and *use* of cities and homes. It enabled me to begin to think beyond (western) normative, top-down modes of development and to think about how cities may be planned with people at the centre of this process. Bathore became the ground upon which I thought about testing some of these participatory strategies of housing, and the title of this thesis - 'Give Me Your Hand and I'll Teach You How To Build' - comes directly from an interview with a self-builder in Bathore, discussing how he learnt the process of house-building from a neighbour.

Whilst informality is the most extensive form of housing in Albania (it is 55 per cent of all stock (Mele, 2010)), I chose to study Bathore not only because it had benefitted from a participatory upgrading programme and there was thus participatory planning strategies to be learnt from, but also because Bathore is the most extensive (and controversial) example of Albania's post-communist urbanisation process, so much so that this type of heady urbanisation is now

called 'Bathorisation' in Albania. Furthermore, in the mid 1990s Bathore's new residents were politically active - fighting for their neighbourhood when the government tried to demolish it. However, as a result, a 'myth' was built up around the neighbourhood and Bathore's citizens have been particularly marginalised by the 'formal' citizens of Tiranë and beyond. However, as I uncover in this thesis, through the upgrading programme Bathore's residents worked with local institutions of power, and as a result there has been a growing recognition of them as 'formal' citizens. Consequently, Bathore is a rich source of learning with regards to both participatory housing and planning processes.

Furthermore, the housing approaches that Bathore has become so famous for made me think about what could be learnt from this context for the UK housing context. Bathore is a product of entrenched scarcity, and so I was interested in examining how prolonged scarcity had been reflected in housing, and whether there were points of learning from this experience of housing for the UK in a period of 'austerity'. Working and living in Newcastle I had seen and felt the changes that the city was going through as a result of austerity policies. The north-east of England is a region that has suffered disproportionally from (localised) government cuts and welfare reform (IPPR North, 2016). Because of this context, coupled with me being personally and academically grounded in the city, Newcastle seemed like an appropriate location in which to undertake this work. The research in Bathore thus led to the creation of Protohome, a self-build housing prototype which was temporally situated in the Ouseburn area of the city (see Figure 3). Alongside xsite architecture and TILT Workshop (a local joinery and art organisation) I worked with Crisis, the national charity for single homelessness and their members, all of whom were in housing need and had past or present experience of homelessness. Protohome was collaboratively built during February-May 2016 and was then open to the public for 11 weeks,

hosting a range of events examining the issues of homelessness, participatory housing alternatives and the politics of land and development.

Figure 2: Bathore, Albania.

Figure 3: Protohome sited in the Ouseburn Valley, Newcastle upon Tyne.

The story I share in this thesis is about the translations, the learning and the resonances of experience between Bathore's community and the self-builders in Newcastle. I was interested in 'learning from' Bathore and translating knowledge about how homes were physically built as well as the participatory processes that Co-PLAN used in order to inform the Protohome project in Newcastle and wider participatory processes of housing in the UK.

Inevitably connecting two places across vast historical, cultural and political difference is a challenge. Indeed, it perhaps seems like a strange thing to do. What can be learnt from a place like Albania for the UK? Why is there a need for this kind of learning in the first place? A central principle underpinning this research is about the deconstruction of preconceptions around 'who speaks' and 'who listens' in contemporary urban planning and housing discourse. There is a global dimension to this imperative with regards to the ways these locations in west and east are situated within power relations, but just as importantly, there is also a local dimension. This research highlights how knowledge is deeply embedded in place, in communities and individuals, rather than always emerging from the top down. This imperative is at the centre of my practice and also my conceptual framework, which draws upon post-colonial scholarship and the philosophies and practices of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR seeks to enable people traditionally regarded as excluded or disadvantaged to have a voice, by working *with* people in the research instead of *on* them. Thus within PAR there is also an imperative to challenge social hierarchies in the methodology and dissemination of the research.

This chapter situates the thesis both contextually and conceptually in the two sites at the centre of this research, whether this is the structural adjustment policies in Albania in the 1990s, or present-day austerity in the UK. I also outline my research questions, as well as what this thesis intends to contribute to research, policy and practice. I highlight how this research speaks to discourses

on housing, translocality and austerity, and how the thesis will manipulate what is left unsaid in these literatures. I discuss how an active translocal lens may forge learning through contextual and geographical difference and analyse how an innovative, participatory research methodology might activate different sorts of research findings. Therefore I highlight how, through praxis, I have grounded the theory in practice throughout this research. Lastly I introduce the terminology that I employ throughout this thesis – that of 'participatory housing', which seeks to use housing as a tool for learning for those in most housing need, and offer a brief introduction to each chapter.

1.1 Locating

In a context of austerity and rising housing precarity in the UK there is a real necessity to look to alternative forms of housing, which may be beyond the state and the market – alternatives that insert the end user back into the production of housing and which respond to the causes and conditions of homelessness through tactics of embedded learning and capacity building. Albania provides an example of a country which has been dealing with its own form of scarcity for many years. This mainly stems from the structural adjustment policies that were imposed on the country in the 1990s by international agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which caused a collapse of industry, agriculture (due to forced decollectivisation), transport networks, services and welfare provision, creating mass unemployment and much poverty in its wake. This affected the northern mountainous regions the most, due to their physical isolation, and caused a huge movement of people from these areas to the southern plains, triggering mass informal house-building on the outskirts of the major cities and thus creating new settlements, like Bathore. With a lack of social house-building programmes, people and families had to respond to scarcity themselves, and continue to do so in the present day.

This research thus examines the situation of (ongoing) scarcity in Albania and what the responses to this were, through the lens of housing. Yet, overall, this research seeks to inform the UK context of austerity - of government cuts and caps, rising homelessness and housing need, and so more weight is often given to UK housing and urban policy in this thesis. Here, austerity in the UK is positioned as the outcome of the worldwide financial crisis or, more accurately, the banking crisis, the effects of which have three characteristics. Firstly, the effects have been distorted: the crisis has been posited by the last two UK governments as a crisis of sovereign debt due to the state becoming 'too big' and spending 'too much' (Blyth, 2013). Secondly, they are localised, as it falls largely to local authorities to carry out cuts to services and resources and this has vast geographical differences. IPPR North (2016) highlighted that in 2015/16 public expenditure decreased by £57 per person in the north-east of England compared to £43 in London and £39 in the south-east. Thirdly, the effects are individualised, as people and communities try to do more with less, and attempt to cling on to an increasingly threadbare welfare safety net.

As the Protohome project uncovered, there are increasing pressures on people's lives, often directly stemming from austerity policies and cuts to welfare and local services. Crisis' 2017 Homeless Monitor stated that between 2010 and 2016 there had been a 32 per cent increase in statutory homelessness acceptances in England, whilst two thirds of local authorities are struggling to find social housing tenancies for homeless people (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). Homelessness, once predominantly connected to family breakdown, substance misuse and mental health problems, is increasingly understood as a direct outcome of welfare reform and property relations (the loss of private tenancies and house repossessions being key concerns) (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). There is thus a *real, felt* and *lived daily crisis* for people who are suffering from what Madden and Marcuse (2016) term 'residential alienation' - the

estrangement from housing and the feelings of fear, insecurity and disempowerment that are produced through this. Narratives of homelessness voiced in the Protohome project involved sleeping in the woods, under a bridge, in a park in a tent, in a car, washing in a service station, begging for legal highs, scavenging for wasted goods and food. Furthermore, as I heard, being without home so often results in both physical and mental ill health, daily distress and fear (Jackson, 2015). Thus for an increasing percentage of people, the ontological security that home can offer is just out of reach.

In light of austerity policies there is a real sense of the fragmentation and the 'rolling back' of the welfare state. Welfare institutions are transforming, fading and dividing, being tendered out or privatised (Flint, 2015; Raco, 2013). Universality becomes conditionality. The state-citizen contract splinters and transforms. Whilst the welfare state still remains an important site of support and security for people, and there are certain 'attachments' (Berlant, 2011) to it within the populace, it is also becoming increasingly regulatory (Flint, 2015; Hancock and Mooney, 2013; McKee, 2015; Raco, 2013). The Protohome project uncovered how this plays out for individuals in housing need through everyday modes of governmentality like checks, controls and appointments. As a result the reciprocal contract between state and citizen is increasingly in the state's hands (Flint, 2015; McKee, 2015). Therefore this research simultaneously seeks to examine this context of shifting welfare, particularly in housing, whereby UK social housing is increasingly residualised and at risk (see my discussion of the 2016 Housing and Planning Act in Chapter 2), at the expense of an unregulated private rental sector. As I result I am interested in using this research to tentatively project forward into what might be a post (state) welfare future for housing. I take up this role because it seems unlikely that a social democratic welfare system and mass council/social house-building programmes will return. Furthermore, as I highlight and harness in Chapter 3, there are also many critics of the social housing sector and the wider welfare state as it

currently exists (Flint, 2002; Flint and Nixon, 2006; Glynn, 2009; Pawson and Mullins, 2010).

Lauren Berlant (2011) discusses this in the form of a new and perpetual moment of crisis - a sort of extended limbo - that the financial crisis has thrust us all into. She suggests that the old certainties, the lack of a sure future is passed, that there is a realisation that history will not progress in a linear fashion, that future security cannot be propped up by ideas of a welfarist past or of future security through the extension of this. For Berlant the 'good life' of upward mobility and job security is fast receding from view. And so, within this context, this research tentatively asks: how can we imagine new housing futures *through* scarcity? And can other contexts of protracted scarcity (such as Albania) offer *signs on a route* to begin to think about this?

If these are the immediate issues that stem from the current austerity context in the UK, the last issue that this research seeks to foreground is the wider context of housing development. Cities are expected to be 'engines of economic growth', repositories of capital flows, where the local and the global meet (Glaeser, 2011). They are sites of speculation, of entrepreneurial urbanism. A 'global', 'world class' vision of the city has become ubiquitous since the 1980s (Harvey, 1989; Ward, 2003). However, in a context of austerity, when local authorities are increasingly cash strapped and are under pressure to be self-financing (through taxes and rates) by 2020, housing is playing an increasingly key financial role in propping up cities and their statutory services (Beswick, 2017). So city councils market their assets, they do development deals with private developers and volume house builders, they set up separate house-building companies and build homes for sale (Beswick, 2017). Local authorities cede power (and land) to private developers and investors in order to keep the housing 'numbers game' afloat, propping them up in the process, allowing them to renege on affordable house provision (Colenutt, 2015; Dorling, 2014;

Wainwright, 2015). And all of this is reflected within the urban fabric, in the glassy, glossy 'StarArchitect' visions, speculative skyscrapers and luxury developments, that punctuate skylines, or, at the opposite end, as we see in Newcastle, rows and rows of identikit housing that amass on the outskirts of cities, some with the life span of a mere 40 years (Sennett, 2006). Alastair Bonnett's (2014) term the 'urban blandscape' has never been so apt.

Increasingly, new house provision, whether the former or latter type, fails to reflect the needs of those on low incomes and those in most housing need. Furthermore, in the UK, people are largely removed from the production of homes. The urban realm is shaped and reshaped around us as urban citizens, with a lack of consultation (never mind citizen participation) in development matters (Raco, 2013; Raco et al., 2016). This de-politicises housing development. But there's also a sense of violence to this. Buildings go up and down, the land is opened up, drilled into, pulled apart. Communities are scattered in the name of 'regeneration' and places are 'cleaned up', gentrified and sanitised, to make them more attractive to outsiders, tourists and investors, instead of the people that live there (Porter and Barber, 2006; Watt, 2009). Furthermore, the meaning and use of home is transformed. It is not just mere shelter, it must now act as commodity, pension, collateral, investment, inheritance. It must be economically productive (Dorling, 2014; Madden and Marcuse, 2016).

This research thus responds to the urgent need to recentre the ontological roots of home through co-produced participation in the actual fabric of the city, and to highlight that personal and collective growth and embedded social and educational learning can be forged through these practices of physically rooting in place.

1.2 Questions

With this context in mind, this research seeks to examine and test what can be learnt from a community in Albania, which has built the physical fabric of place, constructing new social relationships and forging a space through which to 'speak to' and 'with' formal institutions of power in the process, for the UK housing context in a time of austerity. It asks how we might reduce or blur the distinction between the producers and consumers of housing by reconfiguring the ways in which housing is developed and delivered. Not only is the imperative to find new approaches to housing important in the face of austerity policies and the ongoing residualisation of social housing in the UK, but it also seeks to examine the added role that housing, if conceptualised as an activity and as a tool for learning, can play for individuals and groups in most need.

The four central areas of enquiry are:

1. How can practices and processes of participation in housing/planning in Bathore, Albania 'travel' to a group in housing need in Newcastle in a period of scarcity?
2. What new building processes may emerge through this process of travel/translation, which are participatory and have learning at their centre?
3. What is the connection between participation in housing and the creation of social ties, and what role do power relations play in this?
4. How might participatory housing practitioners/groups work institutionally, with formal mechanisms of power, such as the state and other agencies, to scale up participatory approaches to housing, and what is at risk when they do so?

In tending to these questions this thesis aims to offer an innovative approach to research, which grounds theory in practice through an active and participatory

methodology that physically brings forth possibilities for collaboratively-produced housing alternatives that have learning at their centre. Importantly, it seeks to learn through difference, using an Albanian experience of house-building to inform the UK housing context, and so through a translocal lens the research goes beyond comparison, by testing and activating approaches. Albania has been much ignored in academic discourse and beyond, therefore this research also aims to provide an original account/study of participation in housing. And furthermore, in recognition that there is a poverty of language to describe different self-provided housing processes, this research defines 'participatory housing' as an ethical approach to housing, grounded within the philosophies and practices of PAR, which involves the full build of a house by people that need a home and/or employment. Much of the empirical material in this thesis is derived from processes of doing and making, trying and testing, and so, in building a prototype house, this research challenges the normative modes and methods of research methodology and dissemination. The creation of a physical, public-facing building aims to push the boundaries of the research subject and object beyond the written or spoken word, to advocate on a public (and political) stage for more participatory housing solutions. It seeks to propose an agenda for new housing typologies and methods which may be appropriate in times of scarcity, within a context of a transforming welfare/local state in the UK and for those in most need. As a result this research has sought a cross-scalar and cross-sector approach to impact and seeks to contribute to the practice of housing, as well as housing policy, by making visible the potentials for new participatory methodologies in housing that work with untrained 'amateur' builders. As a prototype it offers space for further research, models and approaches in the future.

Next I discuss how this research is situated within the academic literature.

1.3 Situating

Translocal research, meaning that which connects diverse people and places, whilst being locally rooted, is becoming more prevalent in Geography (Clifford, 1997; McFarlane, 2011; Smith, 2001). Much of the most recent literature on translocalism in new urban geography focuses on comparative urbanisms (McFarlane, 2011; Robinson, 2011; 2005) or policy transfer (although mainly one way, from north/west to south/east) (McCann and Ward, 2009). There have been fewer attempts to change the direction of travel and 'learn from' seemingly unlikely locations for the west, and even less that actively seek to test approaches in a practice-based manner.

Furthermore, whilst there has been some attention paid to Eastern European informality (Tsenkova, 2008), this has (largely) not extended to Albania (but see Pojani, 2013). Furthermore, Albania is often ignored in post-socialist studies in favour of countries that more effortlessly and concretely offer a post-communist capitalist success story (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999; Pickles and Smith, 2005). But there are wildly different 'transition' trajectories (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999; Hörschelmann, 2002; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008), and this research seeks to offer a new perspective through the lens of a country which is vastly under researched.

There is a growing body of literature, as well as a growing sector in the UK, of community led approaches to housing, from Community Land Trusts (Moore and McKee, 2012), to co-housing (Chatterton, 2015; Jarvis, 2015; 2011), to co-operatives (Clapham and Kintrea, 1992). In UK policy there has been a particular focus on self and custom build (see the 2011 Localism Act, as discussed in Chapter 3). However there has been less research which focuses specifically on participation in housing by those in housing need from a UK perspective (but see Moore and Mullins, 2013; Mullins, 2010; Ospina, 1987; Teasdale et al., 2011; Turok, 1993). Usually case studies, as well as policy, focus

on individuals and groups that may already have social and economic capital (but see Berner and Phillips, 2005), and thus the added value offered by participatory approaches to housing, (for example with regards to learning and capacity building), has been underappreciated. Furthermore, these studies rarely discuss community based approaches to housing within a context of a transforming state/welfare state - the problems that they seek to counter and challenge are rarely located within a context of rising housing precarity and homelessness. Most accounts of community led housing tend to focus on the importance of choice and control in housing (Barlow et al., 2001), as well as community sustainability and individual wellbeing (Benson, 2015; Chatterton, 2015), whilst for the government this is about diversifying housing supply (DCLG, 2017). As a result, both academic and policy-based accounts of community led housing fail to foreground the potential for it to respond to conditions of scarcity (but see Lloyd et al., 2015).

Whilst there is an established and still-growing literature on the effects of austerity more broadly (McKee, 2015; Raynor, 2017; Vradis, 2014), there are fewer studies that seek to use austerity as a basis to think through and propose new housing realities. This research thus seeks to move beyond the critical discourse of austerity (although it still concurs with, draws upon, and feeds into this), by considering what austerity housing futures might look like. In providing an alternative, and perhaps anticipative account, I utilise the term 'scarcity' as opposed to 'austerity', not only because this term is able to travel across the two studies (whilst 'austerity' is more spatially and temporally bound), but also because scarcity is not just constructed (by macro economic/political forces), but it is also an enduring condition of life and is thus connected to a wider discourse of degrowth from a political ecology perspective (Till, 2014). Thus by employing the term 'scarcity', opportunities emerge for alternative and anticipative discourses, which can both critique current housing realities and propose new housing futures (see my further discussion of this in Chapter 3).

Lastly, within all of the literatures that I engage with in this thesis there are very few cases which seek to speak from researcher experience in facilitating and participating in live build projects. In this research, method and analysis rarely depart from each other, therefore the methodology runs throughout this thesis. And whilst the methodology was messy (at one point during the Protohome project I wrote "What a mess" in my research diary), and exhausting, it was also massively rewarding. But because there are few other case studies or 'toolboxes' to draw upon, I was often going about the methodology blindly, testing and experimenting as I, and we (the Protohome group), went along. There were, of course, many dead ends, failures, twists and reroutes in this process, the stories of which are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Fusing philosophies of PAR with building, hammering, sawing and drilling is perhaps quite unique and to my knowledge there are no studies to date that use PAR in housing processes. Whilst academic attention to PAR is growing (Kesby, 2007; Kindon et al., 2007; McIntyre, 2008; Pain and Francis, 2003; Reason and Bradbury, 2006), there are some accounts that are more critical than others (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Frideres, 1992; Wynne-Jones et al., 2015). Critics state that as PAR has been increasingly used in academic contexts it has become institutionalised and often depoliticised, with researchers often leading the process, as opposed to the community/group. Furthermore, critics also state that PAR is often practiced without an understanding and appreciation of its wider epistemology, with regards to decentring knowledge production and the ethical production of new knowledge, and is often applied in a 'toolbox' like manner, instead of being grounded in the specificities of people and place. Taking these criticisms into account, I have tried to provide a description of participation in housing which is multi-vocal. Furthermore, there is also a certain *materiality* that runs through both studies in this thesis, as it recounts watching, listening and learning, and then actively testing building

processes through engagement with the actual fabric of the city (see Chapter 4) and its institutional working practices (see Chapter 6). Thus the account that I give here is from direct experience, instead of being mediated through other actors, offering a personal and embedded dimension to the research as well as a prototype for further research. Furthermore, because this research was, and had to be (as I go on to explain), institutionally rooted, engaging as it did with a myriad of different actors - the local council, architects, joiners, the Homes and Communities Agency, the third sector and housing professionals – this account is multi-faceted and has had a range of scalar impacts beyond this thesis itself.

Whilst the methodologies of building and participating that I witnessed and uncovered in Bathore were not directly informed by PAR, the study of Bathore certainly influenced how I thought about and practiced PAR during the Protohome project. It provided me with a good grounding in participatory planning and co-design methodologies, which was very useful due to the lack of literature on participatory housing approaches in PAR. Furthermore, whilst I was undertaking interviews and participant observation in Bathore, I was also given a desk in Co-PLAN's (the planning NGO who facilitated the participatory upgrading project in Bathore) office. As I worked there I got to know their employees who invited me to come along to live participatory planning projects and meetings with local communities. As I describe below and in Chapter 2, Co-PLAN make use of participatory planning strategies. I was thus able to see in situ how they worked with communities by testing planning proposals and working in incremental ways. I noted the role that deliberation and discussion played in this process, as well as role play, storytelling, mapping and modelling, to allow communities to find their own solutions to neighbourhood planning problems by focusing on potential problems and real-life situations, and proposing often small scale and doable changes to the fabric of neighbourhoods. As I highlight in Chapter 5, I replicated some of these methodologies in the Protohome project - hearing and witnessing how

Co-PLAN worked with communities gave me ideas for the Protohome workshop process. Furthermore, as I uncovered in Bathore, self-representation for the residents during the participatory upgrading programme was key - residents spoke on the formal political stage and negotiated with the local authority, helping to challenge public mentalities with regards to informality and the 'informal subject', as I examine in detail in Chapter 6. These multi-scalar transformations thus fed into how I approached PAR within the Protohome project, and the potentials that I saw for participation in housing.

1.4 Praxis

In this research, alongside the theories and practices of PAR, I also draw upon post-colonialism, both of which, as I note in Chapter 2, were philosophies that first developed in the global south and have then since travelled. This research aims to deconstruct the traditional binaries that separate east from west, professional from amateur, insider from outsider, thinking from doing, practice from theory, mental from manual and process from product, all of which so often define epistemological frameworks. This means shaking off preconceptions and deeply embedded modes of thinking and working, to, as Ingold writes, "convert every certainty into a question" (2013: 2). Through PAR the research also seeks to bring forth the voice and analysis of the 'Other' or the 'subaltern', whilst making visible the global and local power relations that create the 'Other', whether this 'Other' is situated close to us or far away. Therefore an imperative for both post-colonialism and PAR is to decentre knowledge production, challenging the hegemony of the west and also the (western) academy (Escobar, 1995; GibsonGraham, 1995; Mohan, 1999: 43). They aim to democratise processes of learning and knowledge production and shift power imbalances. This means using the research to question the supposed truths of dominant claims to knowledge, highlighting that knowledge isn't always centred or produced *in* the centre, but might be concentrated over

vast geographical distances, embedded in the past, or in groups and communities that have little economic wealth. And so instead of research that is extractive, that is done *on* people, this research seeks an approach that is done *with* people through co-production.

Furthermore, Protohome was at once a space of learning as well as a space of advocacy. When the building was open to the public group members spoke with, and presented the project to, people in positions of institutional power in the city and beyond, as I highlight in Chapter 6. Thus the project offered transformational potential for the Protohome group members, for them to speak on (more) level terms with 'important' actors. Furthermore, as I stated above, in Bathore I uncovered how the creation of a sense of reciprocity and a space of engagement between potentially marginalised groups and those in positions of institutional power can be an important mechanism to trigger multi-scalar impact. In addition, the space of Protohome also acted as an agonisitic space through its hosting of events and talks, to have difficult and often challenging discussions about housing and homelessness.

Whilst through PAR the boundaries and the outcomes of the research are defined and analysed by the community/group, in the Protohome project these were defined by myself and the other tutors. We had to depart from the methodology of PAR due to the demands of working with potentially vulnerable individuals, some of whom who had complex issues. Furthermore, the physical and often dangerous nature of the building project meant that forms of professional knowledge and (positive) authority were needed (as I highlight in Chapter 5 through my examination of the role of power in this process). As a result it is the philosophical and ethical grounding of PAR that I engage with most fully.

1.5 The sites

This thesis moves between the two case studies across all chapters. However, it is the UK housing/homeless policy that I seek to inform with this research, and therefore the weight of the discussion often lies here. However this is very much a translocal learning process, whereby the research is located and dislocated at the same time, I thus try to find a balance between specificity and generalisability in order to *learn through difference* (McFarlane, 2011; 2010). Yet whilst this research is about 'learning between', there is also a need to develop certain analytical skills for certain places, so strategies and processes of participation or building are learnt and then reproduced *in place.* So whilst it is important that the research is embedded in place and people, these experiences and knowledges of building and learning can be remapped to inform an entirely different context. Repetitively thinking and moving between the two contexts has inevitably been a challenge, it requires operating in an *in between space*. This is what I term *translocal oscillations*. Elements of these *translocal oscillations* were about indirectly 'learning from' or the *translation* of knowledge from one context to the other, whereby knowledge changes in travel to 'fit' a new context (McFarlane, 2011). This can be seen in the strategy of political advocacy that Co-PLAN used to bring forth the voice of community members into a formal political setting, which I describe in Chapter 6. Yet other elements were not about *translation* but instead they operated as *resonances of experience* or understanding between Bathore and Newcastle. These resonances are more ambiguous and indistinct and are used when indirect translations are impossible - perhaps the contextual, cultural and/or geographical particularities are too great, or too much generalisation would need to be employed. As a result these resonances might be mere echoes of experience or understanding between the two sites, such as experiences of being without home, or feelings of 'otherness' that stem from being physically and socially isolated in the city. I discuss *translocal oscillation, translation* and *resonance* in more detail on Chapter 2.

Below I briefly introduce both of the contexts at the centre of this research and the methodologies used in each location.

1.5.1 Bathore, Albania

During April-June 2014 I undertook research in the informal settlement of Bathore, Albania. Bathore lies on the northern edge of the capital city, Tiranë, in the Municipality of Kamëz and has been developed hastily over a period of 20 years by migrants from the north of the country, who moved post-Communism for opportunities, services, jobs, healthcare, education and more. Nearly every house there has been self-built, whilst the area has benefited from a participatory upgrading scheme with Co-PLAN and the local municipality. For almost 10 years Co-PLAN, part-funded to the tune of $10 million from the World Bank, worked with local residents and the Municipality of Kamëz to physically and socially upgrade Bathore, not only constructing infrastructure (roads, electricity, sewerage and water systems) but focusing on the social renewal of the area. The focus of this research is the pilot area of Co-PLAN's scheme – 'Bathore 1' (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Plan of Bathore showing 'Bathore 1' – the pilot area – in red. Note the density of development in the southern part of the area, compared to the north, which is further away from Tiranë. *(Source: Google Maps)*

The main methods that I employed in Bathore were participant observation and semi-structured interviews. I also documented the neighbourhood extensively through film and photography. I traced the self-build and participatory upgrading strategies of the neighbourhood which included the physical self-build processes of incremental construction (design, materials and workforce), as well as how they were culturally and historically embedded (see Chapter 4). I also examined the participatory planning methods that Co-PLAN used, and how they took an institutionalist approach (Healey, 1997) to planning by merging scales of governance and advocating for change in the formal political arena (see Chapter 6). Whilst interviews with community members, Co-PLAN and former and present mayors of the locality, as well as with ALUIZNI (the organisation responsible for the legalisation of informal settlements in Albania) enabled me to understand the specifics about building, learning and participating in housing, participant observation allowed me to gain insight into spatial and social practices within the neighbourhood; highlighting the links between home and life trajectories.

In this process I often returned many times to the same family, either because they had more information, articles, photographs, reports and newspaper clippings to share, or, in the case of one family, because I was documenting the construction of the second floor of their home. Thus I was also able to observe the material house-building process. It is however important to note that I was temporally removed from much of the data in Bathore. I was uncovering the details of a mostly historical settling and building process, as well as the participatory upgrading project. Therefore interviewees were reflecting in hindsight, which carts some difficulties - there is ambiguity to memory. This has affected the data that I was able to acquire here, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5.

During this process I worked with Ana, my interpreter. She became not just a

co-researcher but a good friend. She was brazen enough to spark up conversation with people on the street and to shout over walls into people's gardens. Ana and I got to know Bathore 1 and its residents very well. We would drink coffee in the same café each morning, and eat pizza in the same bar each evening that we were working together. Ana was an integral part of this research, someone who was not just an interpreter but who was as much bound up in the research as I was. It helped that Ana could also self-identify with Bathore's residents - her family were also migrants to Tiranë in the 1990s and had settled and physically built a new life on the margins of the city.

1.5.2 Protohome, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

In Newcastle I worked with Crisis and their members (individuals who are homeless, have been homeless in the last two years or are at risk of homelessness) on a participatory build project called Protohome. Protohome was temporarily sited in the Ouseburn area of the city from May-August 2016 and was open to the public during this time. The project involved a partnership between Crisis, xsite architecture and TILT Workshop (an art and joinery organisation) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Protohome within the surroundings of the Ouseburn Valley, Newcastle and the interior of the building, which was used as an event space.

Protohome is a test, a prototype, it is a 'shell' of a building without insulation or services, but shows the potential to be extended into 'working' housing.

Between February and May 2016 we worked with members of Crisis two half days a week, to train them in woodwork and design skills and to build the 'house' in sections in Crisis' wood workshop. Dean Crawford and Joe Shaw from TILT Workshop and I led the workshops, and we also had two sessional tutors from Crisis that helped with the build and the documentation of the project. We then went onto site for two weeks to construct the building. Members of Crisis acquired qualifications in this period, distributed by Crisis, including working with hand tools, health and safety and lifting and handling. Crisis also provided pastoral support, advice on training, skills, employment and housing for group members, as well as resources for the project as a whole by providing space to work in, organising trips, packed lunches, health and safety and providing press and research assistance.

Protohome was built on a shoestring. The materials cost between £5-6,000. Aesthetically it may not be anything special, it is rather akin to a very large (4.8 metres x 9.6 metres), and very posh garden shed, but it holds the culture of the people that built it *in it*. We used the Segal system of timber-frame building which is a method specifically designed for untrained self-builders which makes use of standard material sizes, making it simple and often affordable to build, and it is erected akin to a barn raising, as I examine in more detail in Chapter 4. But whilst this is a 'system' there is also a sense of creativity to it, the self-builder can easily add extensions over time and can use a variety of different materials.

Protohome occupied a site on the corner of a car park owned by the Ouseburn Trust, a local development/community organisation. The Ouseburn is a place of historic industry which has been privy (up to this point) to sensitive regeneration. It includes a mix of art/music studios and venues, well established pubs, social and supported housing and new student flats. Whilst Protohome was open to the public it exhibited the documentation of the project as well as

hosting a range of events, from film screenings, to artists residencies, public forums, workshops, talks and performances, examining the themes of the project such as housing crisis, homelessness, austerity, the politics of land and development and participatory alternatives. As a result it became a space of advocacy, for speaking to and with many individuals and groups from a range of sectors. Furthermore, a publication and a website (www.protohome.org.uk) was also created for the project as we wanted the impact and reach of the project to extend beyond the place in which it was situated and have a legacy for continuing conversations into these issues in the future. However, the building itself also still exists. After the project we deconstructed it and took it across the road to the Ouseburn Farm, a local community organisation, to be used as a workshop/classroom.

Whilst the methodology used during Protohome attempted to learn from the participatory practices that Co-PLAN used in Bathore, as well as my first-hand experience of these processes when I went with Co-PLAN to live participatory planning projects, meetings and workshops with community groups, it was also largely experimental. Although we all had good woodwork skills, neither I, Dean or Joe had ever built anything on the scale of Protohome, and thus we were often learning as we went, learning off the cuff. It was thus a very reflexive process, but indeed it needed to be so. The lives of the group members were ever-changing and hugely complex, as people moved on and off the streets, had health and money troubles, and so the process had to be flexible to fit their needs. As a result, overall 14 Crisis members contributed to the project, whilst nine stayed with the project throughout.

Throughout the project members made decisions on the methods and activities used in the workshops, offering new suggestions for the design and build process. There was a constant collective cycle of planning, action and reflection (Kesby et al, 2007) through which we could, as a group, analyse what was

working and what wasn't and change the course of action accordingly, and group conversations were very important in defining the route of the methodology, as well as building friendships and sociality, as I highlight in Chapter 5. Throughout the build process we also took group trips to the site and to visit a Segal house example in Northumberland. 'Seeing' and 'hearing' was a very important component of the project.

During the build process, amongst the hammering, sawing and drilling I conducted individual interviews and we had group conversations about homelessness, hostels, the Jobcentre, self-building, histories, experiences, hopes and futures. I also conducted evaluation interviews in September 2016 when we were deconstructing the building and taking it to be reconstructed at the Ouseburn Farm. Completing evaluation interviews four months after the project went 'live' to the public allowed me to see what had changed in group members' lives, whether they had accessed employment, housing or further skills. It also gave them an opportunity to reflect back on the process and the role that the project had played/was playing in their lives. These interviews and focus groups were not intensive or extensive. Instead of recording data through more formal routes I often just took notes of conversations or activities, this meant that the group did not seem to experience what Kitchin (2000) calls research "weariness" which can be an issue, particularly in participatory forms of research which can be an intense collaborative process. Whilst most members did open up, this 'opening up' was relational – some people grasped opportunities to speak whilst others were more fearful or vulnerable to do so.

Within both of these research contexts I worked *through* my positionality, through my role as researcher, participant, facilitator, builder and mediator. This was inevitably a plural position, through which I sat between many roles. But the importance of speaking through my positionality lies in me being embedded within the process, not outside of it. In participatory projects it is

difficult to remain the 'objective observer' when the 'researcher' is actively *inside* the process. I also did not want to *be* the objective observer. But personally it was difficult to find the correct balance between being directly and emotionally invested in the project whilst also being able to stand outside of it, as I examine in more detail in Chapter 2. As a result of this positionality, I built friendships with members of the Protohome group as well as interviewees in Bathore. I am thus tied up in these stories, these people and these places and because of this I hope that the accounts that I offer in this thesis do justice to each person that contributed to this project and that their stories come alive in the proceeding pages.

1.6 Participatory Housing

I call Protohome a 'participatory housing' project. I felt that there was a poverty of language to describe collaborative building processes. For example, the term 'self-build' can mean anything from the full design and build of a house by the end user to a mere stating of where the rooms are situated and what the finishings will be. It also suggests an individual, as opposed to a collective, build. Whereas the term 'self-help' housing is also unsuitable, which, in its British conception, means the refurbishment of empty properties with people in need of a home and skills/education/employment opportunities (Moore and Mullins, 2013; Mullins, 2010; Teasdale et al., 2011).

Instead, 'participatory housing' refers to the full build of a house by people that need a home and employment. It also offers an alternative ethical and political approach to housing in that it attempts to work within a relatively hierarchy free structure and looks to redistribute power and give wider access to resources for builders. Furthermore, its aim to engage those in most housing need means that there is a real focus on the learning and capacity building process. As a result participatory housing offers a *particular* opportunity to reduce or blur the

distinction between the producers and consumers of housing, with the focus on the process of housing being key, as opposed to other less participatory solutions. Because participatory housing denotes a 'full build' it therefore also offers more opportunities for new housing typologies to come forth through a co-design process (although we didn't include this in the Protohome project), which may be simple, affordable and more suitable for the self-build process, as I examine in Chapter 4. By building from the ground up, a stronger sense of ownership for those undertaking participatory housing projects might be attached to this form of housing.

Participatory housing is, of course, a large departure from how housing is normally developed. It thus challenges the 'tried and tested' routes into housing that are offered by large scale developers and volume house-builders where the user is far removed from the design and build process. It also offers a challenge to an increasingly residual social housing sector, whereby those on low incomes often have very little choice in housing (Forrest and Murie, 1988; 1983; Malpass, 1990; Malpass and Victory, 2010).

1.7 Building Blocks

Below I outline the thesis chapters and provide summaries of the arguments they engage with and seek to make.

Chapter 2: The Space Between

The first chapter contextualises the two sites. It opens with a discussion of post-communist Albania, and how I first came to know the country in the early 1990s through my Mum. I discuss the mess, the hopes, the fears and the failures of those early capitalist years, highlighting the structural adjustment policies imposed on Albania which created waves of disinvestment, privatisation, mass unemployment and service and welfare reduction, and caused a mass

movement of people from the mountains to the capital city, which brought Bathore, as we now know it, into existence. I discuss the clashing of northern Albanian agrarian traditions in an urbanised world, and introduce Co-PLAN and Bathore's upgrading scheme. I then contextualise Newcastle through a narrative of constructed austerity, cuts and caps, and the effect this has had on homelessness and housing issues. I discuss how I am 'thinking between' the two contexts, through what I term *translocal oscillations* – the coming and going of mind and body between the two sites, in which there is a sense of being located and dislocated at the same time. I highlight that whilst these oscillations sometimes manifest as an indirect *translation* of practices, at other times they operate as *resonances of experience* between the two sites which might be more subjective, but no less important. I also examine the difficulties of doing translocal research which aims to cut through difference, and the need to create a balance between specificity and generalisability in this process. Because this *between space* is a subjective space – it is created and reproduced by me as the vector for this research and these stories, I therefore discuss my positionality as mediator, facilitator, participant and researcher, and the potential partiality of perspective that this might offer. Lastly, and in relation to my positionality, I discuss participatory ethics as a reflexive, ever-changing practice.

Chapter 3: Scarcity and Agency

In this chapter I examine whether through scarcity people show their agency in house-building and examine the tensions inherent within this suggestion. I do this through a critical examination of the literature on self-help and informal housing. I critique the overly positive, agency centred accounts of self-help (Neuwirth, 2005; Saunders, 2010) which may fail to recognise the wider structural factors and causes of poverty that bring informality into existence around the world. I then examine how community agency is grounded and

used in a UK austerity context through a discourse of localism. Moving beyond these critiques of community agency I seek out an anarchist approach to self-help housing, and employ a critique of the welfare state, as mechanism of control and subjugation, in order to help *think beyond* the welfare state. I specifically examine the work of the architect John Turner (1977), who examined self-help as a tool for learning, economic sustainability and capacity building for the poor. Then, through the empirical material I conceptualise different forms of agency. I examine examples of what I call *induced agency* which are more akin to coping mechanisms which may be a temporary panacea to engrained poverty, and *catalytic agency* which might begin as forms of *induced agency* but if collectivised and politicised can build long term capacity in potentially marginal or isolated communities.

Chapter 4: Housing as a Verb

In this chapter I examine the house-building process in detail in Bathore and Newcastle. I employ traditions of open planning (Jacobs, 1961 [1992]; Sennett, 2006; 1970) to challenge the rationalism of the urban realm. Importantly, I conceptualise the house as a process, as a 'verb' (Turner, 1977), and put forward a flexible, adaptable and incremental approach to house-building, through an examination of the 'core house' model in Bathore and the Segal system in Newcastle. I examine how these approaches can be seen as a form of the new vernacular, through their connection to the culture, history and social life of a place. I examine how a process based approach to housing which foregrounds flexibility and adaptability can offer new notions and practices of design in conditions of real or constructed scarcity. I also discuss alternative pedagogies of 'learning by doing' and 'building/learning-as-dwelling' through the Protohome study, by focusing on tacit and non-linguistic forms of knowledge production via processes of learning, care, repetition, rhythm and failure.

Chapter 5: Participation, Power and Sociality

Drawing on John Allen's (2003) work into the various modalities of power this chapter examines how power concretely emerges in place, through discourse and actions between people instead of being an abstract, ubiquitous force. In foregrounding power, I critique deliberative approaches to participation (Habermas, 1981; Healey, 1997; Rawls, 1971 [2009]) whereby community is so often seen as cohesive and consensual. Instead, drawing on the work of Chantal Mouffe (2000; 1992), I propose a view of community as a site of agonism, as a microcosm of power and dissensus, as a space of productive disagreement. Conceptualising community and social relations as such, I then examine the creation of social ties in Bathore, and how initial feelings of 'otherness' dominated the community, both inside and outside it. I examine how the role of the community based organisations in Co-PLAN's upgrading scheme enabled a deconstruction of both physical and psychological borders between people. Through this, I examine how gendered hierarchies and traditional roles of authority were breached and/or extended. I then examine how group relations were founded in the Protohome project, through conversation, sharing stories, experience and self-recognition. However I also discuss how tensions arose between group members and how these were mediated or not mediated.

Chapter 6: Space of Negotiation

The last chapter offers an agenda for the expansion of participatory housing by focusing on the role of institutions (particularly the state) within this. I recognise that there are always risks when working with formal institutions of power - process and values may get co-opted and there may be diverging value systems/working processes between groups. Yet whilst recognising these

challenges, this chapter also discusses how participatory housing practitioners/groups may work both with and against the state, by opening up what I conceptualise as a *space of negotiation* - a reciprocal relationship between differently placed groups. This is plural space which is open to dissensus. Whilst it is a governing arrangement it is also a space for enhanced civil rights through which communities and groups can speak to and with institutions and actors of power. In proposing this *space of negotiation* I examine the various tactics that Co-PLAN used to create a working relationship between Bathore's residents and the local authority, such as political platforms, media campaigns and public forums and how they operated via a plural political position. In learning from this, I propose a further series of methodological tactics that can be employed by participatory housing practitioners/groups in the UK (and beyond) to work both with and against the state which include *ambiguity*, *subversion*, *co-option* and *evasion*.

As a result, this research aims to make a significant contribution to debates on housing in conditions of scarcity and within a UK context of a transforming welfare/local state, through an innovative methodology which challenges not only how research is produced, but also what the subject/object of the research should/could be. In *activating* a physical and practical build project the research seeks multi-scalar impacts – to set an agenda for participatory housing whilst also bringing forth alternative narratives of housing and being without housing.

Chapter 2: The Space Between

2.1 Introduction

The actions described in this thesis, of house-building and personal and collective growth, are multi-sited. They intertwine across two geographies, merging place and experience together. This chapter examines the two contexts at the centre of the fieldwork – Bathore, Albania and Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, as well as the theoretical and methodological tools that I use to work the *space between* the two sites. As such, in this chapter I respond to my first research question which queries how practices and processes of participation in housing/planning in Bathore might 'travel' to a group in housing need in Newcastle. Therefore at the same time as contextually grounding the discussions of the proceeding chapters, this chapter also opens up conceptual and practical possibilities for connecting these diverse places.

The opening two sections of the chapter roots the thesis in the particularities of place, highlighting not only the diverse histories and geographies of the two sites in question, but also how I have personally come to know them over many years. Yet whilst there is a personal rationale for employing these sites, this chapter also seeks to foreground an intellectual rationale. Both places suffer from different forms of scarcity, whether this stems from the long-standing effects of structural adjustment and the economic insecurity that this has produced which triggered wide scale informality in Albania, or the austerity policies, welfare cuts and caps that have been imposed in the UK since 2010, causing rising levels of homelessness and housing need and which have unproportionally impacted northern cities (Newcastle City Council, 2013). Furthermore, as I also foreground in this chapter, there is a narrative of marginality both within the story of Bathore's migrants as well as those in housing need in Newcastle, who are often at once *physically* marginalised on

the edges or in the covert spaces of the city, as well as *socially* marginalised by the 'formal' or 'housed' residents of the city. Moreover, as I highlight in this chapter, Albania, whilst being a very worthy study of participatory housing models, is also a country that has been largely ignored in academic literature (and beyond), in favour of countries with more routine, linear and less messy routes to 'transition' (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999; Hörschelmann, 2002; Horvat and Štiks, 2015; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). Furthermore, whilst I could have used more than one case to study informality and participation in housing in Albania, I chose Bathore to study in detail, not only because it is the most prolific example of Albania's informal urbanisation process (the term 'Bathorisation' refers to the period of heady growth in Albania in the mid-late 1990s), but also because it has benefitted from a participatory upgrading project with Co-PLAN, a local planning NGO. Thus Bathore is a rich source of learning with regards to participatory housing and planning processes. Yet whilst this chapter pays particular attention to the housing contexts of both places, whether this be the growth of informality and the 'formalisation' process in Albania, or the residualisation of social housing and the growth of homelessness in the UK, this discussion is weighted on the side of UK housing/homelessness context, this being the context that I wish to inform in this research.

In the third section of the chapter I discuss how being situated *in between* these two sites offers some opportunities as well as some challenges both methodologically, theoretically and, importantly, ethically. 'Learning from' Albania requires an ability to *think through difference*, which means that a balance must be found between specificity and generalisability in the analysis. Instead of a *transference* of practices from Albania to the UK I posit a more open and creative movement of translocal knowledge in the form of a *translation* of practices – concrete practices which shift in translation to 'fit' a new context - and other, more ambiguous, connections which operate through,

what I term, a *space of resonance.* This isn't a space per se, it is a conceptual and methodological tool used to highlight elements that are not easily translatable, perhaps because the contextual differences are too great and too much generalising would be needed. As a result these resonances might be mere echoes of experience or understanding between the two sites. To conceptually undertake this, I position myself at the centre of what I term *translocal oscillations* – the coming and going of body and mind from one location to the other throughout the past three years of this research. This is a practice that is simultaneously located and dislocated, at once local and global, that is rooted in the empirics whilst not ignoring the structural. Here I use the term *translocal* to describe a sense of mobility and spatial connectivity between places and actors - whilst places are understood as relational, they are also rooted in the local.

In attempting to decentre the dominant (western) norms of top-down urban planning and housing processes and to deconstruct the psychological and geographical boundaries around space, I use a post-colonial field of vision and 'activate' this through Participatory Action Research (PAR). This framework allows me to foreground my positionality and to speak through the partiality of this. Because I am the vector that connects these two sites together, in the latter part of this chapter I highlight the subjectivity of employing this 'in between space'. Yet at the same time I also stress that within post-colonial discourse and PAR the question of 'voice' is vital. Whilst this framework offers the opportunity to critique the dominant, white, western, privileged (academic) voice, it also creates a potential break within this narrative, by shifting 'who speaks' and 'who listens', whereby instrumental power can become transformative power, or 'empowerment' (Freire, 1970 [2007]). But this imperative can also be scaled up, as I go on to discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, so these alternative narratives and voices may have the opportunity to speak to those in positions of institutional power. Yet where there are

possibilities for transformation there are also tensions within translocal research which seeks to decentre dominant perspectives. As I highlight, in attempting to shatter and decentre hierarchies, researchers may actually recentre and reproduce them. Thus, in the latter part of this chapter I discuss the ethical implications of doing this kind of co-produced work. I forward a fluid and reflexive framework for participatory ethics which has a sense of reciprocity at its centre.

2.2 Bathore, Albania

2.2.1 A country waking up

The first time I saw Albania was through a piece of shaky film, the edges of the frame fuzzy, the sounds of the mini DV tape whirring, the recording providing the soundtrack. The first frame was of Elspeth, school teacher and friend of my Mum, sipping on a Diet Coke on the boat from Corfu to the port town of Sarandë. Sarandë came into view slowly through a blurry haze of heat. Then in a taxi, beeping as it went down the bustling street. People selling their wares from tablecloths on the street - pots, pans, second hand denim. Men waiting. Men playing backgammon on the street. Donkeys with heavy loads veering around rubble and holes in the road. Next, Elspeth and my Mum are stood outside a half-built building. A doctor in a white coat comes into view saying, "We have no equipment, only walls, as you see, only walls. We have nothing, nothing. No equipment… We don't even have any chairs to sit down". They walk through bare rooms, one after another. The doctor and a group of men dressed in flared trousers from the 1970s and brown suits follow them.

The year was 1993 and my Mum was in Albania to train doctors to use a radiography scanning machine, donated by the General Hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne. Albania was not long out of Communism. In 1991 it was the last domino to fall as the communist project came crashing down all over Eastern Europe. Once described as "The deep red land of Marxist mystery" (Gardiner, quoted in Hall, 1999: 162), Albania had closed its door on the world for the last 18 years of the communist regime. This was North Korean style isolation, where internal and external freedom of movement was prohibited, where 700,000 concrete bunkers were built for a population of only one million (see Figure 6), and where a paranoid dictator - Enver Hoxha - ruled the country with a grip of repression (de Waal, 2014).

Figure 6: Bunkers lined up in the Albanian landscape.

My Mum evidently felt the effects of culture shock in these early years. However after her first visit she went back every year, taking more medical equipment, books and resources, training doctors and building professional relationships and personal friendships. She watched the change in the fabric of the country and the change in its people. She witnessed their 'coming out' into the world, their hasty embrace of all things western, of Italian soap operas and domestic 'mod cons', and some of the more regressive elements of Capitalism: gambling and debt. She witnessed their initial anger at being thrust into a world that was more affluent than they had been led to believe in their isolation. Albania had been a locked shop, the party tediously extolling the virtues of their perfect communist society, where all were equal: "the richest country in the world!" they were told. Cruelly, this was a fool's paradise, a grand hoax, and the anger at the incessant lies manifested itself in spontaneous acts of destruction against the communist system. They ripped apart their infrastructure - factories, mines, co-operative buildings, irrigation systems, hospitals and schools, they razed orchards and chopped down forests. They thought that they must delete

everything connected to Communism, to 'start from zero' (de Waal, 2014). One young interviewee in Bathore told me:

> "… after Communism there was this kind of propaganda… that everything [that] was built from Communism was evil. Even though it was built from the hands of the people of Albania. So… industry… was entirely destroyed, everything. The machinery was taken from [the factories] and was sold for iron. Even the machinery that was functioning, that was working, everything was destroyed, was burnt… because it was this idea that everything that was built during Communism was bad".

Albania was amidst "a kind of agitated stagnancy" (Geertz, quoted in de Waal, 2004: viii) through structural adjustment policies put into place by the 'new imperialists' - the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, who offered loans in return for price liberalisation, deregulation, the reduction of trade barriers, privatisation of industry and assets and austerity policies (Pickles and Smith, 2005; Standing, 2002). Guy Standing (2002: 51) goes so far as to say that the transformation of 1989 (and 1991 in Albania's case) was the first revolution to be led by international financial institutions and their capital, whilst Pickles and Smith (2005) writes that shock therapy instantiated "a new colonial regime".

Even now the signs of this violent elimination of Communism are still visible - rusted hulks, the remnants of old Chinese built factories, still lie, gutted, in Albania's landscape, their machinery stripped by scavengers. The closure of industry and the decollectivisation of agriculture in a country where 75 per cent of the population was agrarian created a redundant workforce and moreover, critical food shortages with agriculture only existing at subsistence level, suffering from an acute lack of fertiliser, seeds and machinery (de Waal, 2014).

In the early 1990s, with crops failing, nearly a third of the labour force unemployed and a budget deficit of half the gross domestic produce (GDP) Albania was on the brink of famine. At this time a third of Albanian's consumption was coming from humanitarian aid and during 1992-5 Albania had the highest per capita level of EU aid of any Eastern European state, with a total of $928 million (Lyle, 1997).

These years also saw an almost complete breakdown of state authority, a collapse of what economy the country had, and an escalation of serious crime. One interviewee said to me, "Mostly there was no government at all, mostly just [in] name". My Mum was privy to this, and eventually had to postpone a trip to Albania in 1997 when pyramid schemes in which almost every Albanian family had naively invested their life savings (many selling their homes and/or their hard earned wages doing heavy manual labour in Greece) collapsed. The opening of arms depots in almost every town triggered a prolonged period of violent disorder when the despondent phrase spoken by many, *s'ka shtet, s'ka ligj* ('there is no state, there is no law') was nothing but true (de Waal, 2014). As I highlight throughout this thesis this breakdown of authority has had consequences for how people still relate to the state and other institutions of power and has particularly effected the creation of a reciprocal arrangement between state and society, as I examine in Chapters 5 and 6.

In response to this dire situation, what occurred was a mass movement of people, particularly from the most isolated, mountainous areas of Albania. Over 10 per cent of the domestic population, over 400,000 people, left Albania during 1992-6 to work illegally in Greece or Italy. In 1991 news images shocked, showing 20,000 people crossing the Adriatic Sea in an overloaded boat to Brindisi in Italy. The images showed desperate migrants flinging themselves from a rusting boat and a human chain of people crawling precariously down the side of it. As a result the population of five districts

(Delvinë, Tropojë, Sarandë, Pukë and Skrapar) halved between 1989 and 2001 (Carletto et al., 2004). With closures of schools and hospitals as well a lack of access to basic utilities such as water, electricity and transport connections, the ability to eke out a living on unproductive, mountainous land outside of a collectivised workforce and economy was becoming increasingly difficult. In their midst, migrants left behind swathes of abandoned farmland, crumbling factories, felled forest and eventually wilderness. These are the sites where the story of this research begins.

Thus Albania's 'opening up' was not signified by an exultant David Hasselhoff singing *Looking For Freedom* on top of the Berlin Wall, it was not, as the saying goes, with 'a bang, but with a whimper' (Eliot, 1974: 92). And in the years following 1991, as the country stumbled blindly into 'democracy', the party dripped freedom and political change into Albania, sluggishly and reluctantly, as the Albanian author Ismail Kadare, in his book *Albanian Spring* notes:

> "… a government that had been trained to give nothing without delay, a government that gave with both a clenched fist and a cold heart, with bitterness and spite... In trying to create something better, I had trusted in the breaking up and wasting away of a world that had become more and more unbearable: a world of slogans, parades, festivals, misery, of articles crammed with directives, of Party instructors and the brutality of Party militants, of lying, hypocrisy, and boredom. But this world had proved to be more solidly built than I had realised" (1995: 59).

And so, as my Mum, and then also I, have witnessed, there has been no 'swift switch' from one ideology to another – people have clutched familiarisms whilst politicians have clutched power. In her book about the history of the Albanians Miranda Vickers recalls what an Albanian man said to her in the early 1990s:

"When a father beats his son, the child cries, but still clings to him as the only protector he knows" (2011: 210).

These images, these perceptions, these stories, were the beginning of a long relationship my family and I were to have with Albania, part of which is the story of my research that I write about here. Over the last 11 years I have been back and forth to Albania, with and also without my Mum, building friendships and social ties. I have attended weddings, christenings, family reunions and more. I have been welcomed and hosted; I have been fed and watered. There is something about the place that draws me in, that holds me in place, that encloses me. Of course the experience of place is always intensely personal, and so I have not just witnessed but *felt* huge transformations within Albania over these years. Whilst the urban fabric of Tiranë, the capital city, has been repaired after the power vacuum that left Albania paralysed in the 1990s - the holes in the pavements have been filled and the cobblestones have been set back into place - the *social healing* of the country is still taking place. Many yearn for the communal networks that they lost, they yearn for nature, green space and the clean, car-free streets of Communism. Many people who once had their futures taken by Communism, now have them taken by Capitalism. Youth emigration is high, and two out of three young Albanians nurture hopes of emigrating (MDG-F, 2013). Journeying out of the main cities the poverty and lack of meaningful leadership is devastating. So on the surface Albania is knocking at the front door of the EU, but alongside tentative hopes, there also lies poverty, corruption and nihilism (Bieber, 2015: 7). As I stated above, this has made a sense of reciprocity between state and society difficult, and has had particular consequences for the creation of a participatory culture. In Chapters 5 and 6 I examine how Bathore's residents related/didn't relate to institutions of political power in the 1990s.

2.2.2 Transition to where?

So can we still talk about 'transition'? An Albanian friend recently said to me, "Transition to where?" Is Albania lost in transition? Pine writes that "More than a world moving forwards, or even a world turned upside down, we seem to have before us a world moving sideways and backwards, simultaneously and often skewed" (2002: 98). There is no *one path*, there is no 'normal', only hybridity, only historical pluralism. Albania has suffered a far slower process towards 'democracy' then other former communist countries – the results of both its most recent history (the myriad of diverse internal and external shocks it suffered in the 1990s) and its less recent history (totalitarianism, isolation and a long history of being conquered) and its political and geographical placement simultaneously within, *and on the edge of* Europe. In their work on post-Socialism Burawoy and Verdery (1999) are not convinced that 'transition' will be temporal, that it is a *period of time* that nations states move through and out of. They write, "When we speak of transition, we think of a process connecting the past to the future. What we discover, however, are theories of transition often committed to some pre-given future or rooted in an unyielding past" (1999: 4). Furthermore, they discover that transition is relational, differing across time and space: "the anticipated 'transition' [is] much less certain than some observers might have it" (1999: 4). So trajectories of transition must be understood as open and indeterminate. As we see in the case of Albania, transition meant mass housing informality, but also economic informality.

As a result, Albania sits somewhere between neo-liberalism, clientalism, and corruption where both the economy and the urban realm are both formal and informal (often at the same time). The country's economy only stays buoyant due to remittances earned in Italy and Greece which equal around €700 million a year (Kurani, 2013). And so Burawoy and Verdery were correct in pointing out that,

> "… although markets can be controlled overnight, their character and consequences cannot be controlled. Markets can generate a retreat to barter relations or criminalised trade, as well as to monetised exchange; markets can lead to involution rather than revolution or evolution; markets can be the engine of primitive disaccumulation rather than advanced accumulation" (1999: 302).

So there is a need to redirect away from 'grand theories' of transition - the mainstream discourse - in which all post-socialist countries are moving towards some kind of end goal (i.e. 'democratic', neo-liberal Capitalism). Attending to those countries, like Albania, that are not the 'poster-boys' of transition may aid in understanding the localised and differential social and spatial practices at work across the many post-socialist contexts (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999; Hörschelmann, 2002; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). The experience of Albania highlights that there are multiple histories stemming from uneven paths of 'development'. This is the starting point for this study – noting the alternative ways that the social and the spatial have emerged and been remade at the fall of Communism. This research thus pays heed to these diverse accounts, which emerge through the lens of one migrant community. It tells a story of alternative housing forms and emergent architectures - the not-so peripheral processes of Capitalism - Capitalism's growing housing 'Other'.

2.2.3 The growth of informality

The story of these emergent architectures, these new spatial topologies, begins in northern Albania, in the "scores of abandoned settlements and deserted groves of trees surrounded by rotten, unpicked fruit" (Vickers, 2011: 241). Areas that were effectively 'cut off' from services, transport connections, education and healthcare, paralysed by a vacuum, paralysed *by the state*, paralysed by *no state*, in 1991. Going to the remote region of Tropojë in the north-east of

Albania with a family who migrated to Bathore in the 1990s, I saw the harsh beauty of untouched forests, jagged, steeply sloping cliffs, wasted and uncultivated stepped mountainsides, and the last remnants of life - crumbling houses, factories and roads (see Figure 7). Almost everyone in Bathore came from a place like this.

Figure 7: The region of Tropojë in the north-east of Albania.

The government did little to stem the flow of migrants to the southern plains in the early 1990s, and in 1995 President Sali Berisha (the 'strong man' leader who had firm control over the media, the police and the judiciary) made his famous *'Fytyrë Nga Deti'* ('Faces Towards the Sea') speech, in which he openly recommended resettlement on the plains (de Waal, 2014). And so whilst many new migrants were illegally squatting on state land, this was actually state sanctioned, thus there is a certain legal/definitional ambiguity to this process – it was almost a concession for the lost livelihoods that had been taken by structural adjustment and the coming of Capitalism.

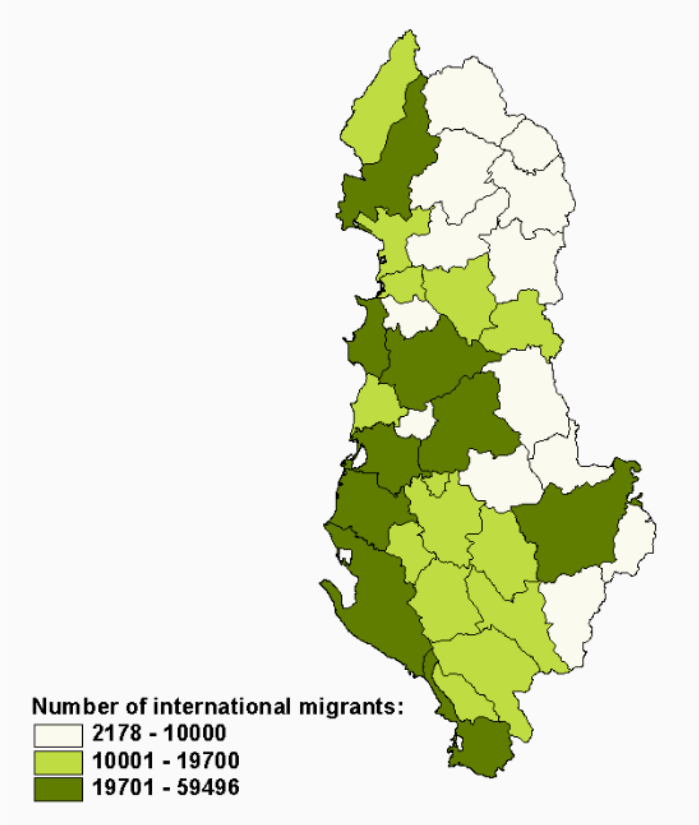

Figure 8: Number of international migrants, 1989-2001. *(Source: 1989 and 2001 Population and Housing Census, INSTAT)*

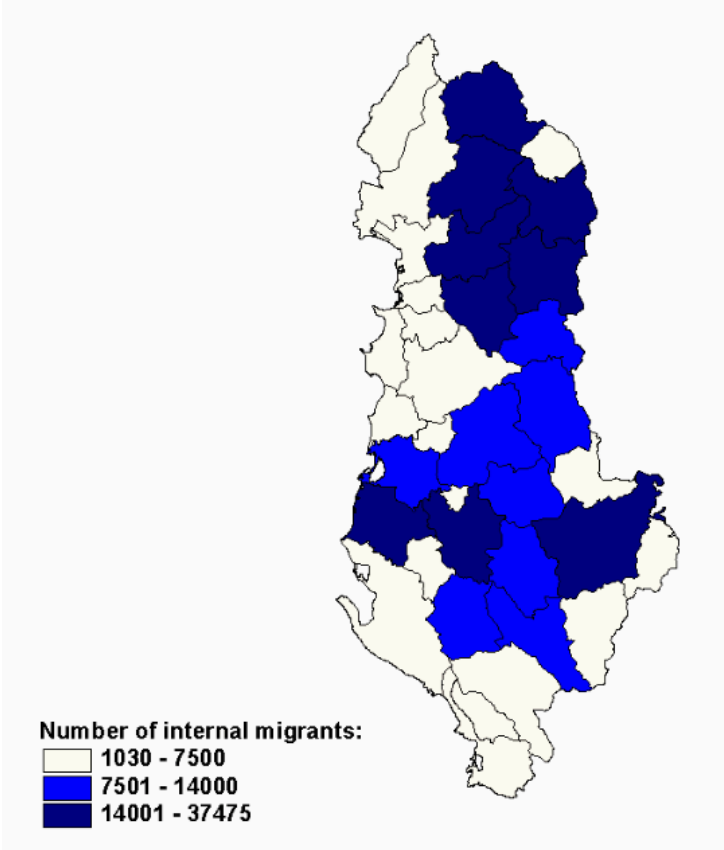

Figure 9: Number of internal migrants in Albania, 1989-2001. *(Source: 1989 and 2001 Population and Housing Census, INSTAT)*

Whilst Figure 8 shows the number of international migrants between 1989 and 2001, who largely moved from the west and the south of the country, internal movements of population came mainly from the north-eastern regions, as Figure 9 highlights. It is estimated that in the first ten years of 'democracy' 270,000 people left their villages and settled on the peripheries of cities and self-built homes (INSTAT, 2014) and 70 per cent of migrants were from the north-eastern regions of Dibër and Kukës (Carletto et al., 2004). As a result the population of Tiranë has dramatically increased from 250,000 in 1990 to 800,000 in 2016 (INSTAT, 2016) and the infrastructure of the city has been pushed to its physical limits (see Figure 10).

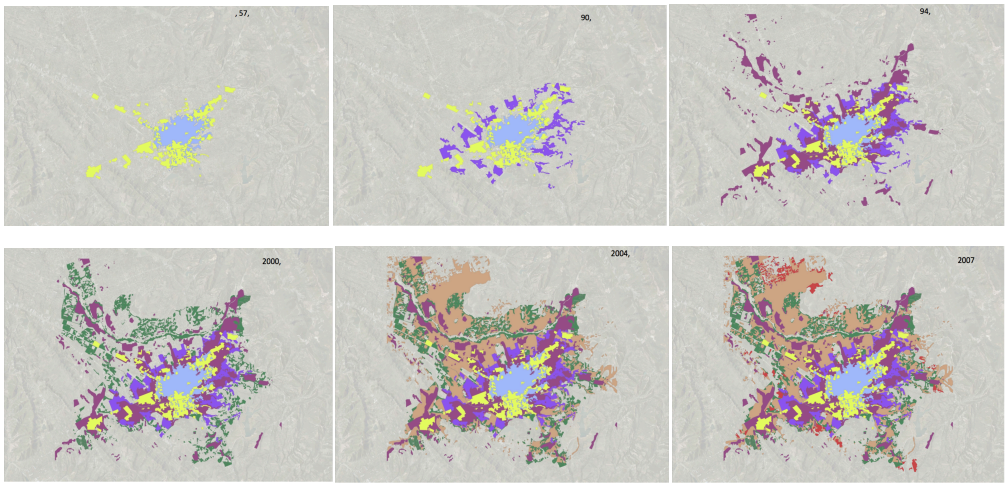

Figure 10: Tiranë's urbanisation process from 1957-2007. Bathore lies on the north-west fringe of the city. *(Source: Co-PLAN)*

Heady urbanisation created a gap in urban housing provision, aggravated by a lack of social housing programmes and the privatisation of government owned housing stock. Mass and hasty privatisation began in 1992 through the founding of The National Privatisation Agency that sold rights of ownership to adult occupants of state housing for a nominal fee of $100-$400 for apartments (which subsequently sold for $10,000-$20,000). By 1995 less than 10 per cent of housing stock remained in public ownership (Kelm et al., 2000: 12).

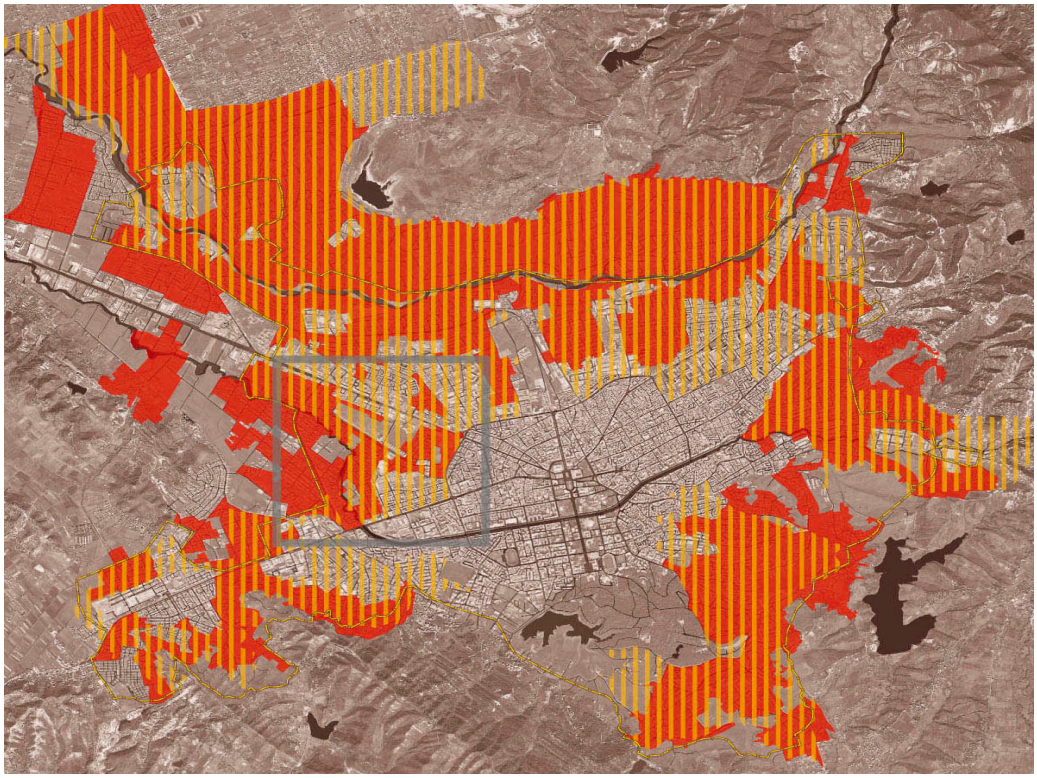

Figure 11: The coloured areas show the informal areas within, and on the outskirts of Tiranë. Note that these have not penetrated the central zone of the city, denoted by the ring road. This is largely because here there has been a stricter adherence to zoning and planning regulations, particularly post 2000, when Edi Rama (the current Prime Minister) became Mayor of Tiranë, and demolished hundreds of illegal buildings occupying public space in the central zone. However it must also be noted that there is no 'black and white' with regards to informality. Indeed there is still much informality in the central zone of Tiranë, but this now largely occurs as building extensions or modifications that have not acquired proper planning consent, instead of large scale informal housing processes. *(Source: Municipality of Tiranë, 2008)*

Whilst problems with housing supply had been a major source of dissatisfaction throughout Communism, with limited choice in location and housing typology (due to an inefficient building industry which often made use of volunteer labour, as I discuss in Chapter 4), poor quality dwellings and overcrowding (Andoni, 2000: 34), the supply of housing in the 1990s and still in the present day, is largely targeted at higher income, often luxury homes. Even for the newly emerging middle class it can be difficult to access housing in urban centres due to low wages and a lack of affordable mortgage finance (Andoni, 2000). For the poor this situation is much worse, most cannot access market-based housing and there are a lack of programmes in place to regulate the

market (Andoni, 2000: 31). Whilst the government has tried to provide social housing, particularly for those in housing need, through schemes initiated through the National Housing Federation, which was founded in 1993, these have largely not reached the poor. Very often they have been given to state officials, politicians and new parliamentarians (Interview with Besnik Aliaj, co-founder of Co-PLAN). And so, with no other options people have provided for themselves. It is estimated that over 55 per cent of the country now lives 'informally' (Mele, 2010). It is now *the* mainstream housing tenure in the face of a state that cannot or will not provide. Therefore whilst these self-built settlements might be peripherally *located* these are not peripheral housing *processes* (see Figure 11 which shows the mass of informal settlements around Tiranë). This has had important implications for this research, because in creating a critical mass these settlements have often been able to advocate for resources, services and infrastructure, as I highlight in Chapter 3 through my discussion of *catalytic agency*.

Informality has been, in part, exacerbated by contradictory and unclear land distribution laws[1] which both attempted to restitute land and property to pre-communist owners at the same time as giving ownership rights to each family working on the land at the fall of Communism. However, in practice these laws have been difficult to implement and there is still much confusion in Albania with regards to this. Furthermore, unclear land ownership provided a good opportunity for many people who could not afford to access the housing market and did not own land or assets close to the southern cities to occupy empty land and construct housing without official permission (Deda, 2000: 109).

[1] The law 'On Restitution and Compensation of Properties to Ex-Owners' (April, 1993) gave ownership rights on a parcel of land for each family working on a state-run farm at the end of Communism, whilst the law 'For Transferring Ownership of Agricultural Land Without Compensation' (December, 1995) recognised the rights of ownership to the ex-owners or heirs of property that had been nationalised by the communists after they took power in 1944.

[2] Right to Buy was originally passed in the 1980 Housing Act. It gave council tenants the

Such an attitude to settling on state land without permission stemmed from a hangover from Communism – the belief that 'collective property is nobody's property'. As a result the issue of land has caused deep rifts in Albanian society and disputes between squatters, users and previous owners are extremely common.

2.2.4 Bathore

> *"The people around us hated us, the people of Tiranë hated us, the government hated us because we just came here and… we were not well integrated."*
> *(Interview with a resident of Bathore)*

> *"People called them Chechens, meaning that they were wild, disruptive… creating troubles."*
> *(Interview with a former employee of Co-PLAN)*

The site of this research, Bathore, became the poster-boy for these unbridled and unregulated building processes in the mid 1990s, so much so that this type of heady urban growth has been termed 'Bathorisation' in Albania. Bathore lies on the edge of Tiranë in the Municipality of Kamëz, around twenty minutes by bus from the city centre, and is the largest self-built neighbourhood in the city at around 400 hectares in size (Kusiak, 2011). During Communism it was a collective dairy farm; its 2,000 cattle provided milk for the party elite. In 1990, prior to the fall of Communism, the population of Kamëz was a mere 5,000 but it has since grown into a town with over 100,000 inhabitants (see Figures 12 and 13) (Mele, 2010). In the area of Bathore there are 30,000 residents (Rina, 2014: 209). Much of the informal building activity in Bathore is built on remittances earned in Greece and Italy, which, during the mid 1990s made up

half the Albanian GNP (Nientied, 1998). As I highlight in Chapter 4, this has had consequences for how people build incrementally over long periods of time in Bathore, often as and when they receive money from relatives living and working abroad. This economic activity thus has implications for the housing typologies employed by the residents, as well as the process of building.

Figure 12: Kamëz in 1994 with 5,000 inhabitants. *(Source: John Driscoll, IIUD)*

Figure 13: Kamëz in 2007 with over 100,000 inhabitants. *(Source: John Driscoll, IIUD)*

Physically, Bathore is part urban, part rural. Walking along the street a pedestrian is faced with walls upon walls upon walls, too high to see over, built in breezeblock, with huge metal gates scattered in between. As I highlight in Chapter 5, these physical barriers, built for protection and privacy has had

implications for social cohesion in Bathore. To the naked eye it looks like a kind of informal gated community. Every now and again there is a shop, a bar, a hairdressers. Goats graze in the wasteland of half-built houses, old men shepherd sheep down the dusty street at dusk and families cultivate grapes to make Albanian *raki*, lemons, figs, peaches, apples and more in their 'walled' gardens (see Figures 14 and 15). As I state in Chapter 5, manifestations of social life bear strong rural qualities in Bathore, and the recognition that tradition bestows has been, and still is, a partial form of identification for people. The process of physically rooting themselves back into the land is important for people in Bathore, both culturally and economically.

Figure 14: Goats graze in an empty plot of land in Bathore.

Whilst at one time Bathore was physically isolated and lacked basic infrastructure, now it is well networked, with transport systems, education and healthcare facilities, and Kamëz has a Palace of Culture and a large town hall. Furthermore, the legalisation of informal settlements began in 2006 with the law 'On the Legalization, Urbanization, and Integration of Unpermitted Construction'. In the same year the organisation ALUIZNI was set up to issue

legalisation documents, but, as of November 2016, in the Tiranë region, only 5,235 properties have been legalised, whilst 100,141 await (ALUIZNI, 2016).

Figure 15: A cow grazes in the unfinished ruins of a house.

Regardless of these new legal mechanisms and the provision of education, healthcare and cultural facilities in the area, Bathore's unemployment rate is around 52 per cent (Pojani, 2013), with only 10 per cent of those employed within the 'formal' employment sector (Rina, 2014: 212) and only around 25 per cent of young people study at high school level, between the ages of 15-18 (INSTAT, 2012). Furthermore, whilst Bathore's residents are not isolated from Tiranë, a negative mentality towards the area still exists. As one ex-mayor said in an interview, "Bathore became 'a legend' in Albania", feelings of 'otherness' were escalated in the minds of the public and residents of the 'formal' city of Tiranë. There is also a cultural stigma attached to the community, who are often referred to as wild and violent, as 'Chechens' or *Malok* (a derogatory term meaning 'mountain dweller'). As I highlight later in this chapter, these processes of 'othering' have resonances with the isolation experienced by homeless people – as those that are potentially socially isolated in the city. This has

important implications for how these people are able to participate in a systematic way in the city, in its fabric (as I highlight in Chapter 4) and with its institutions of political power (as I highlight in Chapter 6).

2.2.5 New urban citizens?

As I tend to in more detail in Chapter 5, the role of the family and wider *fis* (clan members) shaped patterns of migration, settling and building in Bathore in the early 1990s. So some social, cultural and demographic traits of northern Albania (traditionally the land of the *Ghegs* who retain clan organisation and dispersed settlement patterns) have been translated to the south (the land of the *Tosks* who traditionally have land-owning peasant social structures and compact villages) and have continued to play a key role in physically and socially shaping the new community. Furthermore, the customary code of law, the *Kanun*, which laid down specific rules governing all aspects of Albanian life, is believed to be more pronounced in the north (however too much emphasis is perhaps placed on this within many travel, newspaper and academic articles) (Bardhoshi, 2016; King and Vullnetari, 2003; Voell, 2012; Vullnetari, 2007).

Whilst there are specificities of tradition and custom, for Bathore's residents these are differentiated and subjective. It is evident that Bathore's youth are increasingly urban and westernised. Indeed, many young people only know this peri-urban existence, whilst older people are, understandably, more geographically, socially and culturally bound and some live similarly encapsulated lives as in their northern village communities. But whilst many people still have a strong cultural connection to their homeland, they return less and less, as social ties weaken, and it becomes psychologically further away. Yet in interviews most people, even young people, expressed a deep yearning to return at some point. Whilst being fully committed to life on Tiranë's fringe,

people still talk about retiring to the mountains and most still retain property there.

2.2.6 Co-PLAN

During the 1990s Bathore, poor and isolated, struggled for recognition and found itself ignored. The community suffered from multiple hardships, lacking both physical and social infrastructure. The government believed that informality was a temporary phenomenon and when the state regained control the settlements would be demolished (Interview with Dritan Shutina, co-founder of Co-PLAN). Yet the government knew they had lost the battle when the government attempted to destroy housing in Bathore in 1995, huge protests ensued. Then in 1997, with international support, an Albanian planning NGO, Co-PLAN, was created to aid in urban development issues. The upgrading of Bathore's infrastructure became one of Co-PLAN's pilot projects. Having studied at the Dutch Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies in Rotterdam, the two co-founders, Besnik Aliaj and Dritan Shutina, sought to promote capacity building and strengthen citizenship through participatory strategies of urban development. This was a pioneer concept in Albania and the upgrading of Bathore became one of the first community based development projects in the country.

Co-PLAN, part-funded with $10 million from the World Bank, worked with local residents and the Municipality of Kamëz to physically and socially upgrade Bathore for ten years, not only constructing infrastructure (roads, electricity, sewerage and water systems) but also focusing on the social renewal of the area, to help to integrate the neighbourhood into the wider urban area. They started with a pilot area of 13 hectares which was expanded to 400 hectares and split up into six areas (Aliaj et al., 2010). 'Bathore 1', a 13 hectare site, was the pilot area where around 80 families were living. This site is the focus for this

research.

Co-PLAN take a collaborative approach to planning (Healey, 1997), believing that it is impossible for planners to anticipate how spaces will be used and appropriated in the public sphere. They foreground learning by doing, by testing using incremental processes, recognising that knowing and learning the city is a continuous process. They work with existing 'on the ground' knowledge – recognising that there is much energy and understanding to be gained from communities, thereby challenging the centralised norms of most planning models. Their approach has been to "treat people as active participants in the building of their own living realities, and not as passive actors" (Aliaj et al., 2010: 8), and so feel that a capacity building approach allows communities to recognise and evaluate their own problems. However, taking an institutionalist approach to collaborative planning (Healey, 1997), Co-PLAN recognise that knowledge is scattered across numerous groups thus consistent collaboration and learning must occur between communities and formal institutions of governance (Aliaj et al., 2010), as I highlight in Chapter 6. They therefore positioned themselves as a mediator between the local community and formal institutions of governance. This approach, in the words of Dritan Shutina, shows a willingness to invest "in development of democracy at the lowest level", making use of already existing knowledge to start a collaborative process that would incorporate "shared knowledge, values, norms, traits, and social networks" (Dhesi, 2000: 199) that were already existing in the neighbourhood. As the ex-mayor of Kamëz, Fran Gjini, stated in an interview, "Co-PLAN weren't just about urban development, but also the development of democracy" in a fledgling neighbourhood.

I draw on Co-PLAN's approach throughout this thesis to emphasise how they foregrounded the long-term needs of the area through a collaborative planning methodology. However, I also critique some of these approaches (see Chapter

5) for a lack of engagement with how power is present within communities, which inevitably has implications for how equal and representative participatory housing/planning processes can be.

2.2.7 Co-PLAN's methodology

Co-PLAN's methodology was heavily influenced by notions and practices of collaborative planning (Healey, 1997), as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5. An initial lengthy preparation phase involved door-to-door social-economic surveys, in order to capture unknown data about numbers of residents living in the community, their ages and occupations, as well as monthly incomes and expenditures of families and the incremental investments they had made in their houses. One of the conditions of the World Bank was that each family should financially contribute a minimum of 20 per cent to the project, and so this survey helped Co-PLAN to gauge the ability of families to be able to make these financial contributions. The community was then organised into seven sub-division groups of 10-15 families so that the project could be explained in detail and Co-PLAN could assess the willingness of the residents to participate. Through these smaller group discussions, as Besnik Aliaj stated in an interview,

> "You can talk [through] more… because in big communities it's very difficult to discuss. It [becomes a] political exercise and then you're not down to earth and people can't express themselves. You can talk about more tangible things [in small groups], not just general things".

Furthermore, through these subdivision groups Co-PLAN was able to find out residents' priorities for infrastructure improvements (Co-PLAN, 1999). This was done through intensive meetings and workshops in order to gauge perceptions of the area, where problems lay, how they may prioritise their needs and

potential solutions (see Figure 16). Cost calculations were then presented to the groups in order to discuss how residents might afford their contribution, whilst alternatives were discussed, such as the possible sub-division of personal land, or labouring on the infrastructure project, if the project was unaffordable for some residents. An elected representative from each sub-division group was chosen to form the community based organisation (CBO), which in Bathore 1, was called *Rilindja* ('revival') who worked alongside Co-PLAN and the municipality of Kamëz to implement the project, as I examine in more detail in Chapter 5.

Figure 16: Community meeting in Bathore with Co-PLAN. *(Source: Co-PLAN)*

Co-PLAN has been highly influential for the Protohome participatory housing project, both in terms of the philosophy of asset-based development that they employ, but also through their approach to participatory/collaborative planning, which, as I go on to highlight, focuses on dialogue, discussion and testing approaches. Furthermore, because they managed to operate between

scales of governance, acting as a mediator between the community and the local authority, Co-PLAN provides a concrete example for how these processes might be scaled up, which is particularly important for this research which attempts to create alternative avenues for the production of housing.

2.3 Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

2.3.1 A blackened region

> *"I've got the whole alarm bells going off in my head, you scrounger, waster, you're on the dole, you're in a hostel, get yourself a job."*
> *(Interview with Nyree, Protohome group member)*

The other place in this story is also one of scarcity, of making ends meet, of not making ends meet, of homelessness, of unemployment, of stigma and isolation. And, like Bathore, it is also a story of strong roots and strong social ties.

The north-east of England is where I grew up and where I now live. It was once the region that fuelled the world, blackened from the coal mines, constructed both on and of the river, by shipbuilding and heavy engineering (see Figure 17). At its height, before the Second World War, a third of the regional workforce was employed in these industries (Robinson, 1988). My Dad, who worked next to Swan Hunter's shipyard in Wallsend in the 1970s, told me stories about ship launch days, and the throngs of people in the pubs, pints of beer lined up along the bar, waiting for the influx of workers when the clocking off horn sounded. This was life regulated around the collective workplace, of a strong(man) working class, of close knit communities, terraced streets and social clubs. It's easy to be nostalgic.

But this is now a place of *historical* production, a place of factory and pit closures, and the economic and social burden held locally in a region where dependence on these industries was heavy (Robinson, 1988: 12). The north-east is envisaged pathologically as a poor northern relative, physically isolated from London and from the other so-called 'Northern Powerhouse' cities

(Stewart and Allen, 2015). The people once typecast by Margaret Thatcher as 'moaning minnies', for failing to bring forth investment and employment opportunities, have always had a certain kind of inferiority complex. This has certain resonances with Bathore's story of isolation and marginalisation, being on the outskirts of Tiranë, as I highlight in more detail below.

Figure 17: The photograph on the left shows the backstreets of Wallsend's terraced houses and the proximity of the cranes of Swan Hunter's shipyard in 1976. The photograph on the right shows the east Quayside in the 1970s and the big ships that used to pass through the River Tyne, which have now been replaced by pleasure boats. *(Source: Newcastle Libraries and Information Service)*

Yet over the last 30 years many people in the region have benefited from upward mobility, university education and the comforts that consumer society brings. Our towns and cities have been transformed with new art galleries and music centres, whilst 'world class' jargon has been on the tip of every politician's tongue. North-easterners are told that we must rid the region of the 'myth' of subjugation, of any low-lying negativity, to encourage investment, enterprise and opportunity (see Hetherington and Robinson, 1988: 192, for a description of how this was fostered on Tyneside in the 1980s). But for many others this has only offered a feeling of being *out of place,* of being *left behind*

as wages stagnate, as the reality of everyday life for many people in the region is redundancy, precarious labour, zero hours contracts and unfulfilling service sector work in supermarkets, care homes and bars. Unemployment in Newcastle is 8.6 per cent compared to a national average of 5.7 per cent, whilst the city suffers from the lowest Gross Value Added (GVA) per head in the country at £18,216, compared to London's £42,666 (based on 2014 activity) (NOMIS, 2015) and 23 per cent of 16-24 year olds in the north-east are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (DfE, 2015). Whilst figures should always be assessed cautiously, they are useful in that they instantly paint a different picture of a country in which UK employment is said to be at a 40 year record high (Elliot, 2017). There is inevitably a deepening gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots', the north and the south - a gap that is not necessarily reflected in national statistics.

In urban development Newcastle has been privy to the heavy hand of the planner - large scale demolition and redevelopment processes, the inevitable dispersal of communities and urban regeneration that is not locally specific. As a result the urban design of Newcastle is an eclectic mix of building typologies with terraces, traces of brutalism, generic waterfront development and now the identikit mass housing solutions of the volume house builders (see, for example, the influence/work of T Dan Smith as Head of Newcastle City Council and his ideas for Newcastle as the 'new Brasilia' in the 1960s (see Figure 18), the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation's riverfront regeneration in the 1980/90s and the Housing Market Renewal programme (which became a demolition project) in the 2000s). Over the years, as a result of 'managed decline' and heavy handed regeneration programmes, many neighbourhoods and the people within them have been consistently failed by urban renewal processes. And whilst these programmes have often had the rationale of decreasing 'social exclusion', 'stigmatised neighbourhoods', and 'concentrations of poverty', they have often done nothing to stem entrenched

social and economic inequalities (Bailey et al., 2004; Cameron, 2003; Hetherington and Robinson, 1988; Imrie and Thomas, 1999).

Figure 18: The towers of Cruddas Park in the west end of Newcastle which replaced the terraced streets, 1966. *(Source: Newcastle Libraries and Information Service)*

2.3.2 Protracted crisis

> *"The reality is that the poorest places and the poorest people are being the hardest hit, with those least able to cope with service withdrawal bearing the brunt of service reduction."*
> *(Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015: 23)*

The struggle and scars left on the region after it was violently ripped from its reliance on heavy industry are still deeply embedded in the region and have been exacerbated through recent cuts administered to local authorities from central government. As such, this is a story that is firmly embedded within the context of austerity Britain - within the cuts and market crashes, within an atmosphere of uncertainty, where reductions to welfare and state spending have created a space in which projected futures are gone, where the post-war welfare consensus fragments (Berlant, 2011).

Austerity has been presented in relationship to the 2008 fiscal crisis, as needing to be done, as 'good pain', but austerity goes beyond economics, in its most brash form it is inherently ideological (Blyth, 2013). As such, the economic crisis has not only been posited as a crisis of *Capitalism* but as a crisis of the *welfare state* where notions of 'big (local) government' are bad for growth (Cameron, 2009). Locating the crisis as such has created new opportunities for political and financial elites to apply 'shock therapies' within and through already skeletal welfare programmes (Blyth, 2013; Slater, 2014). And so what started as a banking crisis has quietly become a crisis of the sovereign state (Blyth, 2013).

As a result, Newcastle City Council has seen a 22 per cent reduction in funding levels since 2011, whilst £966 million has been sucked out of the north-east area regionally. Over 250 jobs were lost in 2016 alone in Newcastle City Council (JRF, 2015: 11), and over the past six years the Council has lost one third of its employees (Newcastle City Council, 2017). There has been a certain *peeling away* of public services and the Council's ability to administer these (both in terms of its capacity and its expertise, as I highlight in Chapter 6). This has resulted in the closure or transfer of countless facilities - libraries, Sure Start Centres, community centres, leisure facilities and care homes. In Newcastle Civic Centre officers are now hot-desking in an attempt to make better use of

the available space, and whole floors have been emptied to rent to outside groups. Furthermore, by 2020 the government wants local councils to be self-funded, which means authorities will need to rely on collecting rates, taxes and precepts in order to balance the books. This may have vastly uneven results across the country - widening the economic gap between councils with the ability to bring in cash and those unable to (Association of North East Councils, 2014). Consequently, the local state is beginning to operate more and more like a market actor. And so the relationship between the national and local state changes, with the local state emaciated, the national state flexes its muscles. As I examine in Chapter 6, falling finances and human capacity has vast implications for the potential expansion of participatory and other community led forms of housing.

In addition to the devolution of cuts to local government there has been a series of welfare changes. The Welfare Reform Act of 2012 and the Welfare Reform and Work Act of 2016 have seen a welfare benefit freeze and cap, a housing benefit cap, new conditionalities placed on those receiving Jobseeker's Allowance, the introduction of Universal Credit and the Bedroom Tax (officially the 'under-occupancy charge'), which taxes those living in social rented housing with a spare bedroom. Alongside these reforms and cuts, there has been an increase in *demand* across a range of services creating additional expenditure pressures for local authorities and more precariousness for individuals and families. So, as this research uncovers, and as I highlight in more detail in Chapter 3, the economic pain inflicted as a result of these cuts is, and has been falling at the doors of individuals least able to cope, such as the sick, the disabled, the old and the homeless. Economic pain has become individualised, segmented and compartmentalised through a drive towards citizen responsibilisation and increasing conditionalities placed on welfare (Hancock and Mooney, 2013).

This research has uncovered the everyday encounters with this: "hoop jumping" to get benefits, arguments at the Jobcentre, worry, unpaid benefit, sanctions, begging, 'getting by' and 'holding on'. In addition, pathological rationalisations of the poor have dominated these years of austerity with the re-emergence of the terms 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor and 'hard-working families' (Tyler, 2013; Wacquant, 2008). An image of 'Broken Britain' has been cultivated, where worklessness, benefit dependency and lifetime tenure of social housing is seen to act as a brake on social mobility (Boles, 2010: 72). This is mobilised through a focus on *individual* failings instead of *structural* failings (McKee, 2015: 4). And shockingly, within housing, "social housing tenants are rebuked for their lack of aspiration and enterprise" whilst "they are also regarded as 'victims' of the Keynesian welfare state in general and of social housing" (Hancock and Mooney, 2013: 54). So expectations of the state are reimagined and within housing, the nature of the crisis is reframed, by both the government and the media, through realigning causation, prioritisation and responsibility (Flint, 2015: 44-5).

2.3.3 'Wobbly pillar' or cornerstone?: the housing context

Although housing has often been seen as the 'wobbly pillar' of the welfare state (Torgersen, 1987), housing has been absolutely central to a rethinking of state welfare post 2008, with increasing conditionalities and pressures placed upon social housing by central government policy.

Whilst the residualisation of social housing has been a prominent feature of the 'rolling back' of the welfare state since 1970s (Forrest and Murie, 1988; 1983; Malpass, 1990; Malpass and Victory, 2010), this process has hastened as a result of recent government policy. In the 2016 Housing and Planning Act

housing associations will be forced to take up Right To Buy (RTB)[2] with no like for like replacement of stock, whilst councils are also being forced to sell off their high value stock once it becomes vacant. Although arguably the most devastating measure for the provision of social housing will be the decrease of one per cent in social housing rents year on year for four years (DCLG, 2015). Touted as being 'good for tenants', this will have little impact on them as most social housing tenants receive housing benefit (Gershon, 2015). It will, however, drastically limit housing associations' ability to build more houses and tend to their 'added value' activities in social care, education, community development, pastoral care and more. Consequently, there seems to be only one policy pursued by the government: a widening of owner occupation at the expense of the social housing sector. But instead of a rise in owner occupation, what we are seeing is a rise in an unregulated and uncontrolled private rental sector (funded by housing benefit to the tune of £25 billion per year (DWP, 2014)), as it takes on the role of the shrinking social housing sector.

Furthermore, the housing market is bound so tightly with national economic stability that the government continues to look to home ownership and new house-building as a solution both to the economic crisis and the growing housing crisis (Dorling, 2014), without tackling the root causes of housing poverty or inequality. Danny Dorling writes that, "Housing has become the defining economic issue of our times because housing finance is at the heart of the current economic crisis" (2014: 15). This is true. Homeownership has become our national obsession. So much of our personal wealth is tied up in housing that a housing market crash is unthinkable. And so the market continually needs to be propped up by the government. Yet whilst the government openly admits that housing (either to purchase or to rent privately)

[2] Right to Buy was originally passed in the 1980 Housing Act. It gave council tenants the right to buy their council houses at a discounted rate (33-50 per cent of the market rate), depending on how long they had lived in the house, with the proviso that if they sold their house before a minimum period had expired they would have to pay back a proportion of the discount.

is unaffordable for most (see the 2017 Housing White Paper, entitled 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market'), their solutions are reduced to a numbers game – to build more housing, instead of regulating the housing market. And so house builders and prospective buyers are offered incentives (subsidies) to build (including Buy to Let, Help to Buy, Starter Homes and Right to Buy for buyers and a range of funding streams for developers from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)). These subsidies inevitably create a superficial housing market and a rise in house prices (Dorling, 2014: 7). What we are left with is only an "impression of stability" (Dorling, 2014: 8), whilst government intervention continues to nurture boom and bust cycles. This is the government's double bind, particularly when there are votes at stake. Because housing is now expected to operate as collateral, an investment, an inheritance and a pension, no-one can afford a housing crash or market regulation. We are thus all bound up in the economic stakes.

Furthermore, developers and house builders are not interested in meeting housing need, instead they drip-feed supply to keep prices buoyant - demand should always exceed supply, the market must not be flooded. And so they sit on land and watch the prices rise – the logic so often being *not to build* (Dorling, 2014; Madden and Marcuse, 2016; Meek, 2014).

And so the 'housing crisis' is created anew, with each policy step. As a result the housing precariat are now a wide-ranging group with 1.9 million people on the social housing waiting list nationally (DCLG, 2016) and a lack of regulation in private renting, meaning that poor and overpriced housing is often given to poor people. This obviously has wide implications for people that cannot afford to rent privately, and thus heightens the imperative within this research to foreground new ways of providing housing for low income groups which are beyond the state and the market.

2.3.4 Without home

Whilst for the government the 'housing crisis' is largely connected to a crisis of affordability for the middle class and has largely been posited as a numbers game (which, as I stated above, has allowed them to take certain actions, such as the deregulation of planning and offering financial incentives to house builders and developers), housing crisis is also real, felt and lived (Madden and Marcuse, 2016).

At the hard end of austerity is homelessness, the context within which this research in located. So often considered in relation to family breakdown, a lack of familial networks, drug, alcohol and mental health problems, the relationship between housing policy, welfare reform, property relations and precarious lives is becoming increasingly clear through austerity policies. Crisis' 2017 Homeless Monitor found that rough sleeping had increased by 132 per cent since 2010, whilst placements in temporary accommodation had increased by 52 per cent since 2011, and two thirds of local authorities reported that welfare reform was directly responsible for rising homelessness in their area (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). An increasing proportion of those made homeless are from the private rented sector while homelessness acceptances resulting from mortgage repossession have also risen (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). And so the relationship between property relations and homelessness is becoming more and more blatant (Blomley, 2009; 2004; 1998). Blomley believes that homelessness is "utterly entangled within property" (2009: 577), stating that "Property tenure has become a social fault line" where "the social exclusion that generates homelessness is partly produced through the routine workings of the property market" (2009: 581).

Furthermore, punitive policies, whilst having a long history in North American cities (Davis, 1990; Mitchell, 2003; Smith, 1996), are now being rolled out

across UK cities, such as Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) which seek to criminalise begging and other 'undesirable' activities such as 'chuggers' (on street charity fundraisers) and busking in the evening. The 'image' of the person on the street evidently sullies the image of the 'successful' city and can deter investment as this quote from Councillor Nick Kemp of Newcastle City Council highlights:

> "There are a number of anti-social behaviours in the city centre that upset and irritate the public. These include chuggers, aggressive beggars and people on legal highs. It's important for the vibrancy and commercial success of Newcastle that we deal effectively with these behaviours" (Newcastle City Council, 2016).

PSPOs and other punitive policies attempt to restrict the behaviour and actions of the homeless trying to 'get by' on the city streets (Waldron, 2009). Banishing of homeless people from city centres in order to cleanse urban space and create new spaces of corporate capital and consumption highlights the disciplinary role that urban policy and planning can play in the regulation of homelessness (Davis, 1990; DeVerteuil et al., 2009; Mitchell, 2003; Smith, 1996; Waldron, 2009). For Mitchell (2003) this is the 'post-justice city', for Davis (1990) it is the 'carceral city', and for Smith (1996) it is the 'revanchist city'.

Whilst these critiques are welcome and sometimes accurate, often accounts of the punitive regulation of homeless citizens ignore the real, lived and everyday experiences of people living in precarious housing circumstances, which this research seeks to uncover. Instead of seeing homelessness through the lens of the homeless individual, they often locate it in the punitive and regulating state. The aim of this research has been to shift that lens. Whilst recognising that the lives of the homeless are sometimes controlled and regulated by the state, by

the benefit system, by the criminal justice system, there is also a necessity to recognise agency (Cloke et al., 2010; DeVerteuil et al., 2009; Jackson, 2015; May et al., 2005; May and Cloke, 2013). Whilst in Bathore we see people being forced from their homelands because of the destruction of their livelihoods - mobilised through various national and international forces - we can also recognise a certain agency that emerged through this, in the rebuilding of homes and social networks. And so, in the same way, we cannot rationalise homelessness through pathological explanations. The homeless person is not a sick patient. And whilst, through the lens of austerity, we can witness new geographies of exclusion and corporeal survival and how new emotional and material landscapes of 'otherness' have opened up, we must also recognise elements of care and compassion: a hand on the shoulder, the words, "Are you ok?", accompanying someone home, networks of mutual support, of friendship and safety - how solidarity grows in marginal spaces, as I examine in more detail in Chapter 3. So where there is punitive state control, there are also spaces of humanity, spaces where social networks are founded and developed, where instead of being expelled from urban space, people can exercise control over it (Cloke et al., 2010; May, 2000; Ruddick, 1996; 1990).

In the Protohome project we worked with the homeless charity Crisis, and learnt what material and emotional support agencies and charities can offer homeless people, as well as how social relationships might be formed through these formal support mechanisms, as I examine in Chapter 5. Cloke et al. discuss how homeless services might embody resistance, rather than co-option by an increasingly neoliberal welfare system. They state that homeless services operate in a 'messy middleground' - they are simultaneously "a cog in the revanchist machine, yet engineered and operated by people for whom revenge is the last thing on their mind" (2010: 11). As a result they call for "new cartographies of homelessness" – a focus on how the geographies of service provision, but also the networks of street support, shape the geographies of

the neoliberal city in order to "develop a better understanding of the nature of these welfare interventions, and of the relationships *between* the punitive and the apparently supportive" (May and Cloke, 2013: 898). This therefore requires an ethnographic focus on the homeless experience (Jackson, 2015). It also has particular implications for the role that third sector organisations may take on in the expansion of participatory forms of housing for homeless people, as I discuss in Chapters 6 and 7.

So whilst this research attempts to move away from an account of the homeless subject as passive receptor – the body that is 'done to' by the state and the law, this is often variable and subjective. Some individuals may experience more freedom than control through life on the streets, whilst others may recognise only control and subjugation. Furthermore, it is important that the homeless experience is located within an understanding of wider structuring forces. This also means recognising that homelessness is about much more than housing but being *without housing* frames other issues, such as social isolation, relationship or family breakdown, health problems and substance misuse, as I highlight throughout this thesis.

2.4 Cultivating the Space Between

2.4.1 Translocal oscillations

Throughout the course of this research I have oscillated back and forth between Albania and the UK, physically and mentally, in order to understand what can be learnt from the Albanian experience of house-building for the UK context. Taking a translocal approach to this research is not only important, as I highlight below, to decentre knowledge production, but also specifically to advocate for more *participatory* forms of housing. There is a real need to challenge normative approaches to the production and consumption of housing in the UK and translocal research provides one opportunity of bringing forth new possibilities and approaches for housing. Furthermore, as I forward in Chapter 7, translocal research may also be one way of bringing coalitions of housing practitioners together across geographical distance and difference, to fight for more equitable housing approaches on the international stage.

In this research there has been no one-way 'transfer' of knowledge but a constant to-ing and fro-ing from 'there' to 'here', a continual 'thinking across' the two sites. As a result I have been working the *space between*, a sort of interstitial, trans-space, which is delineated through this movement. But because I am the vehicle for this, this is not an objective space but a subjective space, it is one of my own making, I have called it into being and as such, I have defined it. This inevitably causes tensions with regards to what data is/isn't presented, as I highlight below. Furthermore, as a result, this trans-space is ambiguous. At times, it can and does operate as a *space of translation* – an active learning space, where practices and methodologies of building and participating are learnt from Bathore and translated into the Newcastle context. In *translation* there is an initial process of encounter (in Bathore this was through participant observation and interviews), this knowledge then travels and is translated into the new context. Through this I 'read', translate and make

connections between a multiplicity of stories and practices of working, such as those of building, as I examine in Chapter 4, whereby the flexibility and incrementality of the building process is examined in situ in Bathore and then translated to the Protohome project, as well as strategies to work across scales of governance which I examine in Chapter 6, whereby I assess how Co-PLAN acted as a mediator between the community and the local authority, and then forward how this strategy could be translated into the institutional context of the UK. As this latter example highlights, whilst learning can and does take place, transformation of practices/strategies always occurs in translation. Thus translation is never *direct*.

Yet at other times, when practices and the contexts from which they emerge are too different/difficult to translate or are locally bound, the learning operates more as a *space of resonance*. Here a *space of resonance* is not a physical space, but a conceptual and methodological space which I employ to highlight how common understandings or experiences may meet and entwine across vast geographical space. These experiences are not indirect translations - perhaps the contextual, cultural and/or geographical particularities are too great, or too much generalisation would need to be employed. These resonances of experience/understanding can be seen in Chapter 5 through my discussion of how social ties, as well as power relations, were produced through the participatory process both within the community in Bathore as well as within the Protohome group in Newcastle. In Chapter 5 I highlight that whilst the methodologies involved in both of the projects might have been radically different, there are resonances of experience between how people worked or didn't work together in the two participatory projects which can forge wider learning with regards to participatory housing processes. The *space of resonance* is also at play through the various experiences of being without housing for both groups. Whilst the causal factors and the actual extent of

scarcity might be radically different, the experience of being in housing need and being physically and socially marginalised resonates across difference.

But these translations and resonances are emergent. They are sometimes concrete and sometimes more ephemeral, sometimes they diverge and sometimes they converge. They often come into view, but then go out of view. So there is a sense of hybridity as stories and experiences of practices, histories and futures are learnt from, resonate, converge and overlap. The themes in the proceeding chapters are derived from these *spaces of translation* and *resonance*. This 'learning from' is evidently muddy, messy, and often unclear and evidently cultivating the *space between* requires a certain amount of flexibility, both methodologically and theoretically, as well as a critical consideration of my positionality, as I discuss below. It is also important to note that this translocal approach is currently, in this research, one way, rather than two way. Whilst translations and resonances between the two sites do come to the fore, the research and the learning as a whole, has not 'travelled back' (as was my original intention). Whilst I have travelled back to Bathore on a number of occasions since doing the central part of my fieldwork there in 2014, and have spoken with Co-PLAN's employees and kept them up to date with the research, learning in an extensive and strategic manner has not been exchanged, due to time and logistical pressures. However, I do discuss the importance of translocal *exchanges* in more detail in Chapter 7.

Furthermore, much of the data concerning Bathore with regards to incremental processes of building and Co-PLAN's participatory upgrading programme, which I examine in detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, is temporally distanciated (having occurred largely between the mid 1990s-mid 2000s) and so an exchange of participatory housing knowledge from Newcastle to Bathore, may now not be very useful for Bathore's community. However, this is not to say that an exchange of knowledge could not have wider implications and opportunities

for learning beyond Bathore, for the wider Albanian housing context, and indeed for Co-PLAN itself. Indeed, my discussion of working both with and against formal institutions of power in participatory housing projects in Chapter 6, as well as my critical discussion of power relations that emerged through the participatory process in Chapter 5, may offer some concrete learning for Co-PLAN.

As a result this research is 'place-binding' not 'place-bound' (Ingold, 2011). Yet there are moments in this thesis that are more rooted in one place rather than the other. At times more descriptive weight is given to the Albanian study yet at other times it is the Newcastle study that takes precedence within the ethnographic narrative. Yet beyond this descriptive analysis, because I am seeking to 'learn from' Albania in order to inform practices and policies of housing in the UK, the *tone* of this thesis, and much of the policy discourse, stresses the UK housing context.

2.4.2 Translation

As I stated above, this research is not about a wholesale *transfer* of knowledge, but instead the cultivation of *spaces of translation* and *resonance*. Knowledge and policy *transfer* from north to south or from east to west can often be crude, involving the exporting of 'packaged solutions' – so called 'best practices' - which may not be context specific. McFarlane states that this reduces "urban learning to questions of economic innovation, urban and regional competitiveness, and organisational learning, and have offered less in terms of critical engagement with power inequalities" (2011a: 5). This can be seen in the structural adjustment programmes imposed by global agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank on countries in 'transition', such as Albania. As such, in mainstream policy discourse there is a tendency to view the global south or east as places in which policy travels *to*, not *from*.

In the context of this research, a full transfer of knowledge and practices from Albania to the UK would be equally difficult considering the diverse historical trajectories and governance cultures of housing in each location. As a result this learning occurs *indirectly*, often changing to fit the new context. Instead, *oscillating* between the two sites, where knowledge and learning transpires through *translation* or *resonances of experience,* offers an *indirect* approach to learning across seemingly 'different' contexts. This implies a certain creativity both methodologically and theoretically, a certain openness to trying, and sometimes failing, to forge connections across often vast psychological and geographical space (McFarlane, 2011a; 2010; 2006). Within this is a tension between specificity and generalisability, as I highlighted above in relation to *translation* and *resonance*. This is a tension that is difficult and sometimes impossible to resolve (Roy, 2009). As a result, this is inevitably a less linear and more entangled process. Furthermore, there is also a danger that these *translations* and *resonances* of practices/experiences (as well as the theorisation of this) may reinstate, feed into or mask forms of (cultural or social) exploitation and co-option (of participatory ideas or practices, for example). This could become a practical and theoretical red herring, radically compromising my desire to use the research to decentre knowledge production. Even when knowledge does translate from south/east to north/west, and even when this is 'dressed up' as 'participatory', these approaches are still often analysed as hierarchical or neo-colonial (Angeles and Gurstein, 2000). As I highlight in Chapter 3, these accounts/processes may over emphasise poor communities' capacity and agency, they may extract knowledge in insensitive and unethical ways, they may mask inequalities of resources and power, and they may depoliticise development processes, whereby 'local knowledge' gets badly transferred (through misreading or misinterpreting, which may be deliberate or undeliberate) into mainstream agencies and institutions and becomes co-opted. Furthermore, when translocal work is used in an *academic* context, it

may also reiterate divides and hierarchies, it may recentre whilst *apparently* decentring (Angeles and Gurstein, 2000). As I stated above, whilst this research/learning could not 'travel back', this could have been one way of addressing these potential conflicts/tensions that I am seeking to confront, to offer further potential for learning and critical reflection of practices and approaches.

2.4.3 Working between the local and the global

The idea of viewing places from 'in between' (Entrikin, 1991) and working the *space between* helps to blur scalar distinctions so that the global is not valorised over the local and vice versa (Freeman, 2001; Katz, 2004; McFarlane, 2009). This is an exercise in translocal thinking and practicing - intertwining the local, regional, national and transnational scales, understanding that the local constructs the global and the global constructs the local - they are co-dependent on each other (Katz, 2004). But in making use of the global scale, where people, place and experience seem to merge into one, where new networks of communication forge shared experience, there may be a tendency to homogenise or flatten diversity. Instead there is a necessity to develop more *situated* understandings of place, and, in this research, the building, learning and sociality process in both Bathore and Newcastle, making sure that learning between different contexts does not forego these particularities (McFarlane, 2006).

Katz's (2001) concept of 'counter topography' highlights that instead of over valorising the global scale as the foremost force influencing and burdening the local, there is a need to understand how power structures are *translocally* produced. She advocates doing this by observing situated knowledges and material social practices *in place* and producing a critical topography of these practices. In highlighting the intersections between social practices in highly

differentiated places (what Katz calls 'contour lines') we can put globalisation to good use in order to "enable the formation of new political-economic alliances that transcend both place and identity and foster a more effective cultural politics to counter the imperial, patriarchal, and racist integument of globalisation" (2001: 1216). So, for example, through translocal networks local struggles to forge space for homeless people may be connected to global movements concerning equal access to shelter, as I highlight in Chapter 7.

There is something active and productive about the entangled cultural experiences that emerge from these trans-spaces (Clifford, 1997). Within this research I use translocal practices of learning and translating across seemingly radically different contexts (although this is largely in one direction) to interrogate normative practices of homebuilding in the UK. In doing so I also attempt to marginalise the dominant (western) perspective of how cities should be planned and houses should be built (Robinson, 2005; Roy, 2011; 2009). But this is not just an academic exercise. Rethinking geographies of housing in the west is important in order to offer more equitable housing options for marginalised people which foreground learning and human flourishing, whilst also opening up a space for those voices to be heard in institutional contexts concerning housing and homelessness issues, as I foreground in Chapter 6. So there are practical and ethical implications of marginalising the dominant perspective that move beyond the theoretical and academic context.

So instead of geographical distance there is a need to see intersections, whether these be through experiences that resonate across contexts, or opportunities for learning and the exchanging of knowledge. Yet this should occur without flattening out difference or diverse topologies, histories and cultures (which, in this research are certainly distinct), without viewing places telescopically (Amin, 2013; Haraway, 1991; Peake, 2016; 2015; Peake and Reiker, 2013), and without stunting the means and recognition of agency, as I

examine in Chapter 3. Clifford writes that there is a need to avoid "the excessive localism of particularist cultural relativism, as well as the overly global vision of a capitalist or technocratic monoculture" (1997: 36). Therefore local difference should be preserved whilst also illuminating structural and/or systematic factors (McCann and Kim, 2013; Pratt and Rosner, 2013).

Roy (2009) suggests a seemingly oppositional combination of 'specificity' and 'generalisability'. In writing about travelling urban theory she suggests "that theories have to be produced *in* place (and it matters *where* they are produced) but that they can then be appropriated, borrowed, and remapped. In this sense, the sort of theory being urged is simultaneously located and dis-located" (2009: 820). As a result, in this research I attempt to work in the space between difference and similarity, heterogeneity and homogeneity, the local and the global. This means that I don't give primacy to either in each pairing but instead focus on the ways that differently located processes inter-relate, and how scales and approaches can be entwined, whilst at the same time not homogenising by *forcing* connections through *translation/resonance*, but instead operating in a grey(er) space which is perhaps more messy and often less clearly defined.

2.4.4 Learning through difference

Theoretically and practically oscillating back and forth across space, as I described above, may help to challenge and change the normative, one way flows of knowledge from west to east or from north to south that typifies normative policy transfer (McCann, 2007; McCann and Ward, 2011; McFarlane, 2011b; 2006).

In her work on urban comparison and *Ordinary Cities*, Jennifer Robinson (2011; 2005) states that we make assumptions about cities deemed 'different' from

each other and "these assumptions have functioned to restrict comparisons primarily to cities that are already assumed to share certain specified commonalities" (2011: 2-3). She writes that many populations are excluded from the spaces of global Capitalism (and here she is not just referring to global inequalities but also to the processes of 'othering' that occur within spaces of 'developed' Capitalism). Robinson recognises that the 'world cities' narrative (Sassen, 2001), which has been employed around the world by international agencies and governments, ignores many countries that have starkly different development trajectories (such as the Balkans in the case of this research), writing that, "World cities approaches… operate to limit imaginations of possible urban futures" (2005: 94). These developmental perspectives continually consign certain countries to the concerns of 'development' instead of examining the potentials that lie within them, and specifically, as in the case of this research, what can be learnt from them.

However, as Robinson states, this necessitates first the analysis, and then the deconstruction, of the psychological boundaries around space, that "willed imaginative and geographic division made between East and West" (Said, 1995: 201) which Edward Said examined. These are the imaginary geographies that focus on a preconceived notion of *difference*; a notion through which familiar space is 'ours' and unfamiliar space is 'theirs' (Frank, 2009: 71; Said, 1995: 55). Yet one of the questions of this research is, what happens when 'their' unfamiliar space becomes 'our' familiar space? When the precarious nature of 'their' housing seemingly encroaches on 'our' 'developed' space? Furthermore, can these global 'contact zones' (Pratt, 1991), be employed via translocal research, to create a common space that connects our 'here' and their 'there'? These questions should, of course, be assessed cautiously. As I iterated above through my discussion of the dangers inherent in translocal practices of learning and translation, theories and practices of new urban geography, such as McFarlane, Robinson and Roy's work which seek to

decentre the centre may also be privy to being co-opted, reinstating the hierarchies and veiling the asymmetries of power between cities that they seek to collapse (Smith, 2013). In this thesis I seek to connect the practices of post-colonialism and PAR, and this may provide one promising way of addressing these dangers by attempting to reconfigure the power relations in housing development processes. However, it must also be noted, that these theories and practices can never be completely failsafe given the critiques of both post-colonialism and PAR, which I discuss below.

Furthermore, whilst I draw upon approaches from comparative urbanism (McFarlane, 2011a; 2011b; 2010a; 2006; McFarlane and Robinson, 2012; Robinson, 2011; 2005), the concepts and practices of translation and resonance are not about comparison per se, instead they are the tools I use to *learn from* Albania for the UK. A comparative approach would seek to analyse each case study in light of the other and compare and contrast key elements in an analytical way in order to back up certain claims. Whilst there may be some elements of comparison that operate through these practices, in the main the process I discuss here is about *actively learning from*, and, importantly, *mobilising* situated knowledge across contexts. Whilst in McFarlane's (2011a; 2011b; 2010a; 2006) work comparison is practiced in an expanded sense as not only a research method but also a mode of thought, which seeks to use comparative approaches to foster learning between different places, there are still no implications here for the *active practicing* of this learning by academics themselves. So whilst McFarlane's work does move beyond comparison as used to explain or back up certain claims or commonalities (see Soja, 1992), this research seeks to *further* ask: *how* can the learning process be activated? What happens *through* and *after* the learning process? In this sense the approach I discuss in this thesis is not so much about *comparing* but *testing*. This mobilisation is key, because it is not just an analytical approach, instead it uses

the translations and resonances of practices and experiences to practically and productively seek out new ways of producing housing.

2.4.5 Marginality and agency

As I stated above this research links post-colonial theory with the ethics, approaches and methodologies of PAR. In acknowledging that PAR was founded in the global south and has strong connections to post-colonial theories and practices (see Freire, 1970 [2007]) I use these approaches to scrutinise difference and to bring forth the voice of the 'Other', whilst at the same time not denying the agency of this voice to speak and be heard. But, as I stated above, I also wish to foreground a critical reflection of these approaches and practices that have been foundational to this research. Within both Bathore and Newcastle we see processes of 'othering' occur within city borders. This is a certain 'domestic Orientalism' (Buchowski, 2006) whereby Said's 'imaginative geographies', which dramatise distance and difference, are extended into the domestic through localised, pathological descriptions of people and place. This can be seen both on a macro scale in terms of Albania as a nation state and on a micro scale in Bathore and Newcastle, as a localised space of marginality and fragmented identities.

The Balkan states have always been considered on the edge of Europe, Europe's 'Other', "the 'not-yet' of political modernity; the developing, the emerging, the democratising, the transitioning" (Smith, 2005: 359), the lagging behind, the catching up, or, as Chakrabarty (2000) states, sitting in 'the waiting room of history'. Todorova writes that the Balkan region appears in the west's eyes as "semi-oriental, not fully European, semi-developed, and semi-civilised" (1997: 17), clinging onto the coat tails of the EU. Within this ambiguity there is a sense of "attempted Europeanisation (westernisation, democratisation)" (Todorova, 1997: 466) – a country which has not taken the 'intended' route to

Capitalism and globalism. Stenning and Hörschelmann state that within this discourse, "Difference is reduced to relative backwardness and these states are perpetually deemed to be 'catching up' in both material and institutional terms" (2008: 320).

Albania, in particular, is seen as 'Other'. Once described as "an un-European powder keg" (Lampe, 2014: 1), it has largely been ignored in the 'history of Europe' and in the history of post-Socialism (Horvat and Štiks, 2015). This is perhaps a result both of Albania's less recent history (as a country between east and west, colonised by the Ottoman Empire) as well as its more recent history (its isolated communist past). Thus a sensationalist, 'symbolic geography' (Morley, 1998) has been constructed around Albania – one that is associated with crime: the mafia, child prostitution and drug lords. Albania has been constructed as a "collage of fantasies" (Glenny, 1999: 559), negatively stereotyped across Europe by the international media, academic and political class. This has been, in part, a public response to the huge migration of Albanians to EU countries in the 1990s and 2000s and the tensions that stemmed from this, particularly in Greece and Italy.

But Albania has also widely been disregarded in academia and particularly in post-socialist discourse in favour of more 'classic' exemplars of post-Socialism - case studies of countries and cities that have taken more 'routine' and 'successful' routes to Capitalism (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999; Hörschelmann, 2002; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). Albania exists on the periphery of these 'success stories', of the burgeoning Eastern European tourist destinations and new Easy Jet routes. And so history and geography have been erased in transitology (Hörschelmann, 2002; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). Whilst there are countless post-Socialisms, post-socialist studies has often had universalising tendencies and has been central to the imposition of hierarchical spatial constructions. There is thus a real need to understand that transition is

ambiguous and not pre-given (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999). The 'ideal scenario' of transition was not practised in Albania and therefore new narratives need to come forth to emphasise the important differences between post-socialist countries (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999; Hörschelmann, 2002; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008).

As I stated above, whilst residents of Bathore have been actively marginalised and ignored both by the 'legal citizens' of Tiranë and by the political class, pathological rationalisations and stereotypes are also at work in the UK with regards to the urban poor - the 'underclass', the 'scroungers' and 'chavs', which is played out in punitive policy, such as PSPOs and 'spatial fixes' aimed at urban cleansing and the deconcentration of the poor. But whilst Said's account of Orientalism, the discourse of globalisation (see, for example, Hardt and Negri's (2001) account of *Empire*) and the punitive accounts of homelessness largely ignore agency, PAR is rooted in bringing forth this agency as research that is *done with* people, not *on them* through a reflexive, dialogic approach. By bringing forth agency it also offers a counter hegemonic account (Gramsci, 1971) which subverts and deconstructs normative narratives of power, dominant cultures and the series of inclusions and exclusions on which they are premised. In this sense there is a real connection between the aims of PAR and the account of post-colonialism that Homi Bhabha (1994) offers. Bhabha returns agency to the colonised 'Other', offering a counter narrative, by discussing mechanisms which threaten colonial domination. He shows that decentring how the dominant narrative makes claims to knowledge opens up the possibility of contested discourses - it plays the politics of visibility against the politics of invisibility (see my discussion of this in Chapter 6).

Thus through the co-production of knowledge and participatory approaches to planning and housing which the two studies foreground, new truths and representations may be brought forth. This is a practical and grounded form of

theorisation – praxis - informed action that leads to creative transformation (Freire, 1970 [2007]). Thus through PAR 'instrumental power' (power held over someone) holds the potential to become 'associational power' (power held collectively) (Allen, 2003), as I highlight in more detail in Chapter 5. Furthermore, one of the key drivers of this research has also been transformation on different scales, beyond that of the individual/group/community. Instead the research has sought to link up the various scales of governance structures and institutions involved in housing – attempting to feed into their practices and policies and attempting to open up spaces for wider discussions into new housing options to take place, whilst also creating opportunities for potentially marginalised people to speak to people in positions of institutional power (see my discussion of how the Protohome group presented the project to local authorities, the HCA and other housing, planning and architecture professionals in Chapter 6).

Yet there are also many critiques of these approaches, particularly when academic researchers (especially from the global north/west) are involved in PAR (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Frideres, 1992; Wynne-Jones et al., 2015). Its institutionalisation within the social sciences means that it may be deployed without a wider collaborative approach or participatory worldview, whereby researchers fail to relinquish their power and control to participants and instead, reauthorise their role as an expert (in participatory approaches). Furthermore, researchers may reinforce pre-existing hierarchies amongst groups/communities and PAR may be conceived and practiced purely as a 'localised' tool for community participation, instead of one that aims for cross-scalar engagement and change. In such scenarios PAR could become a dangerous device to actively further the scope of neoliberal power, losing any politicised and politicising potential in the process (Kesby et al., 2007; Reason and Bradbury, 2006) (see my further discussion of these dangers in Chapter 5).

2.4.6 Speaking through partiality

As such, there are ethical and methodological concerns regarding my positionality that may occur either through the employment of PAR or through operating in a trans-space, in between two locations. The place in which I position myself as researcher and practitioner is precarious. This is arguably a tension within all ethnographic and participatory research, but this is particularly present within this research that attempts to *mobilise* and *bring forth* (and not just *reproduce*) new knowledge across contexts.

As the main narrator of this story and the vehicle for the translocal learning process, I have chosen what knowledge travels, whether this be, for example, practical building methods (as I examine in Chapter 4), or ways of working with the state in participatory housing processes (as I examine in Chapter 6), how this travels and to whom. There is a certain partiality of my perspective which is embedded in the choices I make with regards to what knowledge and practices travel. There are gaps – differences glossed over, or left out, points of learning emphasised, whilst others understated or unsaid. There is also an issue of 'conscious unseeing' and 'blind spots' (Frank, 2009) - ignoring aspects that don't 'fit' the narrative. Furthermore, in translation, meaning may become twisted and/or fall apart. This partiality is also found in the different significance given to each case study at different moments.

As the vector for this learning and translation process I could not be impartial. I could not reconstruct myself as "a mysterious, impartial outsider, an observer freed of personality and bias" (England, 1994: 242). But it was also not the aim of this research to attempt to stand outside of myself, playing the role of the 'detached researcher', and there was also no way of practically doing so, as my role went beyond that of the academic researcher, in the Protohome project I was mediator, facilitator *and* participant. And thus, during the research and also

in this thesis, I could and can only *speak through* my positionality, shifting and unsteady as it may be. I came into this learning process with an agenda and carried with me the heavy, and sometimes useful, baggage of already existing knowledge and preconceptions about 'normative' (western) housing processes (England, 1994). Yet at the same time, through creatively employing an interstitial, *in between space* of learning and translation, I seek to dislocate these - to highlight the tensions within western housing norms and to attempt to bring forth new housing trajectories, as learnt from Bathore. And whilst I am a white, westerner, studying at an elitist university (which often reproduces and authenticates normative western-based claims to knowledge), I also have a long personal relationship with Albania, and I have roots in the north-east of England. These embedded connections offers my structural positionality a strength, and thus throughout this thesis I foreground my positionality, as researcher and participant, I speak in the first person, with an 'I' and a 'we', and whilst I draw upon and foreground the experiences of the many interviewees and participants in this research, it is me that chooses the quotes, that highlights, centres and underscores.

This positionality also influenced the process of the research. It enabled me, for example, to gain access to both present and former mayors of Kamëz and the mayor of Tiranë. Furthermore, recounting the story of my family connection to Albania helped me to break down psychological borders between myself and interviewees. The same positionality in Newcastle, as a 'Geordie' and a local person enabled me to forge close relationships with group members in the Protohome project, to engage in discussions about place and history, to feel at home in the Crisis workshop with the group members, instead of being an objective outsider. Yet this positionality also hindered me at other times. Local charities and organisations in Bathore were often reluctant to speak to me, the neighbourhood having being portrayed negatively in the past by foreign agencies.

There were inevitably power differences between myself and the interviewees/group members. At times this made me feel uneasy. Perhaps it was a kind of historical production of guilt, which is bound up in narrating a story about vulnerable or potentially marginalised individuals and groups. One issue here is inevitably one of 'voice' – of 'speaking for' and 'speaking to' (Appadurai, 1988: 17). As I stated above I have chosen who speaks in this narrative and what elements are foregrounded. I paraphrase and, in the case of the Albanian interviews, translate. There are inevitably certain implications that this selectivity of view carts, stemming also from the doors that were (or weren't) opened to me and my ability or inability to speak to certain actors, for the data that I was able to acquire and thus the arguments that I am able to make in this thesis. For example, as I highlight in Chapter 5, when discussing how sociality was forged through the participatory planning process in Bathore, many of my interviews were with elders who hold particular positions of power in Bathore and who were leading the community based organisations. This means that it has been difficult for me to fully critique the participatory process and how inclusive it was because my data stems mainly from people in positions of authority in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, because the interviewees were speaking to a foreigner, they may have wanted to paint an overly, and perhaps an unrealistically optimistic view of their neighbourhood, which has been and still is, actively marginalised by citizens of the 'formal' city. As a result some of the issues within the neighbourhood may have been downplayed. Of course I can only speculate about how this has coloured the data, but it is important to take these potential implications into account in the analysis in the proceeding pages. However, I hope that this can be mitigated to some extent through the multi-vocal approach to the narrative (Appadurai, 1988; Rodman, 1992) and through the transcription of whole discussions in the proceeding chapters. Furthermore, through PAR, there is an opportunity to antagonise unequal power relations and expose the partiality of our

perspective as researchers and practitioners (England, 1994: 250). I hope that the proceeding chapters reflect this.

Whilst the recognition of the partiality of my perspective cannot merely be rationalised, discussed or even practiced away. Normative belief structures are deeply embedded, and western academics and practitioners are bound up with certain privileges and *ways of seeing* (Berger, 1972) that cannot be dissolved easily. However, speaking to and through these privileges may help to dislocate them.

2.4.7 Participatory ethics

The translation of knowledge which is at once transnational and also locally grounded in histories, structures and lives is a challenge both practically and ethically. There is an ethical and post-colonial imperative to learn across difference and to forge connections between 'unlikely' locations. This shift of vision may help to transcend the rationalism of much mobile policy discourse, as stated above. The link between post-colonialism and PAR and the ethical demands of these theoretical frameworks/practices is primarily a question of knowledge production – where and by whom knowledge is normatively produced and how these imaginaries might be decentred. This requires an ethics of knowledge production that foregrounds both the instrumental power differences between groups as well as the opportunities for subverting these.

Paolo Freire's (1970 [2007]) work is useful in this respect. He recasts learning and knowledge production as having transformational potential. Although he foregrounds power relationships, and the multi-dimensional and ever-changing effects of these, Freire embraces power not just as a negative and oppressive force, but one that is productive, in which collective knowledge generation creates opportunities for individual and group empowerment and for speaking

'to' and 'with' instruments of power, as I examine in more detail in Chapter 6. For example, as I discuss in Chapter 5, in the Protohome project care was taken by the tutors to avoid glossing over power relationships but to actively highlight and antagonise potentially exploitative or manipulative relationships that occur either within or through the project or which frame participants' lives in a wider sense (such as their relationship to the state, to housing or homeless services) (England, 1994).

As I stated above, PAR seeks to have the voice of the 'Other' set the terms and boundaries of the knowledge production process, as well as representing themselves within this process. Whilst in the Protohome project the group members did not set the terms or process of the project and did not evaluate it, we did use adaptive research strategies, adjusting the parameters of the research to the changing conditions and challenges of the project, and undertook this through a cyclic collective decision making process (Kindon et al, 2007: 17). Understandably, when a process is co-produced and not fixed, this may bring forth complex issues that other, non participatory research might not. We thus undertook the Protohome project using a participatory ethical framework. Due to the fluid and emergent nature of the project, the ethical framework was designed to be reflexive in order to respond to shifting needs and situations, instead of being a fixed practice (Armstrong and Banks, 2011; Manzo and Brightbill, 2007). This approach differs from standard professional or research ethics which tend to focus "on the articulation of principles of action and some more specific rules of conduct" (Armstrong and Banks, 2011: 24) and is therefore a more generalised, 'box-ticking' exercise. Instead, participatory research tends to raise more complex ethical issues which may be beyond the scope of institutional guidelines (Armstrong and Banks, 2011; Leadbeater et al., 2006; Manzo and Brightbill, 2007; Pain, 2008). Furthermore, the researcher is not just accountable to an ethical review panel, but to participants, which, in the case of the Protohome project, could be potentially vulnerable. Throughout

the project we had to be especially sensitive to working with individuals who may have been historically marginalised, and perhaps lacked confidence. As a result a support network was built into the project - we worked in close collaboration with Crisis who provided personal support to all participants. Each group member had a progression coach who offered advice on work, skills and housing and pastoral support.

Whilst we didn't design the ethical framework with the Protohome group members, prior to the site build one member of the group felt it would be a good idea to write a Group Contract, which outlined what was expected of each other during the site build. This included aspects like having respect for each other and for the tools and materials, and to look out for each other's wellbeing on site. As one member said, "sharing responsibility… for each other, for the equipment, for the wood, for the whole build and for the project itself" was vital. These methodological tactics helped members to own and direct the process, to represent themselves, as well as to look after each other, through a sense of reciprocity.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the two sites – Bathore, Albania and Newcastle upon Tyne, UK – and has grounded them in the specificities of history and geography, in the constructed, imposed scarcity of structural adjustment and austerity and in periods of transformation and/or migration. I have highlighted how both communities/groups at the centre of this research have been physically and socially marginalised in the city, and how processes of 'othering' have occurred as a result.

This chapter has also opened up a methodological and theoretical space through which to interrogate how I/we might think and learn through contextual difference, whether this stems from differences of history, culture or political situation. I have introduced the conceptual tools employed to learn between Albania and the UK: *spaces of translation* and *spaces of resonance*. Some practices/approaches can indirectly *translate* across geographical distance and difference, yet as I have stated, they do transform in translation, whereas others are more ambiguous or ephemeral and end up as *resonances of experience* or understanding between the two sites. Employing these tools offers a practical framework for the proceeding discussions, which oscillate back and forth across the two studies. Whilst in this thesis I draw from comparative approaches to urbanism (McFarlane, 2011; Robinson, 2011; 2005), I also seek to move beyond these theories by actively practicing and testing the learning that emerges from Bathore. Whilst this framework aids me methodologically, it also emerges out of an imperative to decentre knowledge production, whether this be in global or local terms. Questioning not simply 'who speaks' but also who controls knowledge production and for what purpose it is directed is very much at the centre of the connection I make between post-colonialism and PAR. As a result, one of the driving goals of this research was transformation on a range of scales, not merely on an individual/community level. This is

important methodologically but also is a major influence for my conceptual framing, as I have highlighted in this chapter.

This chapter has also used this theoretical framework to foreground my positionality and the ethical challenges that may emerge from processes of co-production and working with potentially vulnerable individuals (particularly in the Protohome project). I have highlighted that whilst there are important difficulties and dangers with regards to power differences in all academic work, by utilising PAR in a way that foregrounds continual critical reflection with communities/groups, researchers may begin to decentre the academic voice and foreground the voice of the 'Other', but also go further than this by having this voice speak to people in positions of power and be heard. In the process this may open opportunities to question normative systems of knowledge production. However, as I have highlighted in the latter part of this chapter, PAR is not always a panacea, but itself is privy to being depoliticised, co-opted and misinterpreted. I re-engage with these dangers in detail in Chapter 5.

As a result this chapter has engaged with the first research question which asks: How can practices and processes of participation in housing/planning in Bathore, Albania 'travel' to a group in housing need in Newcastle? In doing so it has set out the theoretical and practical tools that need to be employed in order to learn between the two sites, as well as introducing the two contexts at the centre of this research and some of their potential differences and connections. Furthermore, my connection between post-colonialism and PAR offers a practical and conceptual framework for the proceeding discussions which employ practices of *translation* and *resonance* to examine the learning process in more detail.

Chapter 3: Scarcity and Agency

3.1 Introduction

Scarcity and agency could be perceived as somewhat oppositional concepts. Scarcity defined as lack could suggest a closing down of housing options, whilst agency might be associated with an opening up, the widening of these opportunities (Till, 2014). However, instead of conceptualising scarcity and agency as oppositional, what if they were connected? What if, through the context of scarcity, people showed their agency? In this chapter I put forward a conceptual grounding for exploring the connection between scarcity and agency. I do this through a critical examination of the literature on informal and self-help housing. In doing so, I tend to the second part of the first research question which asks how learning might travel from Bathore, Albania to Newcastle, UK in a period of scarcity, by foregrounding the importance of the context of scarcity to the discussion of participatory housing alternatives. In doing so, this chapter seeks to build upon the critiques of overly agency-centred accounts of community participation in housing to put forth a conceptual grounding for understanding how, in light of these critiques, a focus on *politicised* agency can still be useful for thinking about participation in housing in scarce conditions.

Agency and autonomy are central to debates about participation in housing, for example in Bathore conditions of scarcity induced mass participation in housing. Beyond the house-building process in both contexts, there are other, perhaps more indistinct, moments of agency that make up this story. These moments might be small, everyday processes of 'making do', what I term *induced agency*, more akin to coping mechanisms (particularly in the Newcastle case), such as checking parking meters for coins or building a temporary bed out of pallets. Or, as in the case of Bathore, they might have huge impacts on

the fabric of the city, its infrastructure, social networks, employment patterns and more. Whilst this *induced agency* may only operate as a temporary panacea for large scale social and political failings, becoming a manifestation of the physically and psychologically exhausting practice of living in an extended crisis, eventually these *tactics* might translate into collectivised, politicised and organised forms, that build long term capacity, as can be seen in Bathore. This is what I term *catalytic agency*.

Before I delve into the empirical material, I examine how the connection between scarcity and agency has been central to both positive and negative debates about self-help and participatory forms of housing. This links to wider concerns about what the role of the state versus the citizen should be in housing, particularly for those in most housing need. This is central to the disjuncture between Marxist and anarchist approaches to housing, as conceptualised in Friedrich Engels' 1872 text *The Housing Question* in which he castigates the anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the founder of mutualist philosophy, for supposing that housing could and should be produced outside of the state and beyond capitalist economic relations through self-help and mutualist approaches. Engels saw this as the individualisation of the housing problem, whereby sweat labour only exploits, and furthermore, because of the structuring nature of Capitalism, Engels believed that *no* housing could be produced outside of this economic system.

More recently, this debate has been enlivened through the literature on self-help and informal housing. An ideological switch by governments and global agencies, such as the World Bank, to self-help and participatory approaches to informality, rather than the demolition of settlements, (as exemplified in Co-PLAN's participatory upgrading scheme, funded by the World Bank), as well as the promotion of the 'Third Way' and forms of localism in the UK and other parts of the west, have provoked critique about the depoliticisation of

development and community control within participatory processes (see Berner and Philips, 2005; Cleaver, 1999; Cooke and Kothari, 2006; Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Featherstone et al., 2012; Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012; Manzi, 2015; Mohan and Stokke, 2000; Williams, 2004), with academics and activists asking: who *really* has control; who *really* has power in these processes? These critiques have been particularly lively with regards to the connection between *constructed* scarcity (such as structural adjustment in Albania or austerity in the UK) and the growth of participatory/self-help approaches to housing and community development. Many critiques focus on how self-help is often used as a tool by governments and agencies to deal with imposed or constructed periods of scarcity. I also examine what Roy (2011) terms 'human potential urbanism', whereby the squatter citizen is reimagined as an agency-fuelled, entrepreneurial subject, often in opposition to the reality of life on the city's margins.

Whilst accepting the critiques surrounding agency-centred accounts of self-help and participation in housing, I then examine how these debates might be built upon to examine how scarcity might engender, or merely make visible, new forms of communal agency and autonomy in housing. In doing so I seek out an anarchist approach to housing, as opposed to a Marxist critique of self-help approaches which locate its analyses within processes of capital-labour relations and the crisis tendencies of Capitalism. In doing so, through an examination of the relationship between state and citizen and how agency is restricted in house-building in various ways, particularly in the global north, I foreground a critique of the welfare state through the empirical work. I examine how members of the Protohome project experienced relations not of reciprocity with the state, but often of control and subjugation. Whilst examining the system glitches and the new subjectivities created through the welfare state, I foreground how the current 'rolling back' of it and its capture by the market

affords a possibility of *letting go* of it in its current form, and allowing new, non state or market controlled approaches to housing to come forth.

With regards to this, I then sketch out a typology of agency, which highlights how new narratives of housing might be formed through a focus on how agency becomes visible through scarcity. This lays a groundwork for the proceeding chapters, which examine processes of designing, building and collaborating in more detail. I examine different forms of agency, firstly *induced agency*, which may not transform beyond survival mechanisms to deal with daily crises. However, I examine how these techniques of survival can, if they are sustained, organised and collectivised, become what De Certeau (1980 [2011]) terms *tactics* – forms of *catalytic agency*. Here tactics are actions made in the present (perhaps akin to coping mechanisms) without foreseeing how they may contribute to future forms of human and social flourishing, but which, if sustained, can translate into politicised actions which can make valid and lasting claims on space, and become prototypes for new housing typologies – as we can see in Bathore. And so *induced agency* can translate into *catalytic agency* or *tactics* which may allow individuals and groups in poverty to have more autonomy over housing forms and structures. But, as I state in this chapter and throughout the thesis, these tactics, if they are to be truly effective for participatory housing and empowering for potentially marginalised people, must be supported by institutional mechanisms, as I examine in Chapter 6. And so, whilst I focus on agency in this chapter, I do not aim to construct a binary between structure and agency, instead I believe they are co-constitutive of each other.

So whilst this chapter grounds my argument, the proceeding chapters examine how the connection between scarcity and agency was *practiced* through the housing process in both Bathore and Newcastle. In this chapter the weight of the discussion lies within the Newcastle study, rather than Bathore. This is

because the UK is the context that I wish to inform in this thesis, thus it is important to ground the discussion within the setting of scarcity in the UK in order to understand what tools can be used to think beyond normative housing processes in such periods. Furthermore, the effects of scarcity were very present in Newcastle, and particularly within the group members of the Protohome project, thus their experiences are a useful tool for understanding why housing alternatives in scarce conditions can and should be founded. Equally though, this is a discussion that has application beyond the UK, due to the manner in which I conceptualise 'scarcity'.

Here I use the term 'scarcity' as opposed to 'austerity' or 'structural adjustment'. Both austerity and structural adjustment suggest a certain economic and social phenomena which may be constricted to a particular time or space. For this reason these terms do not transfer easily between the two contexts at the centre of this research. Instead the concept of scarcity may connect to a more progressive and positive discourse of 'degrowth' (see Bendell, 2016; D'Alisa et al., 2014), which, as Jeremy Till states, challenges "the very ineluctability of growth" (2014: 10). It suggests limits to human and ecological capacity and thus new opportunities for living differently, whereas austerity and structural adjustment are fixed ideologies which are directly connected to the structural outcomes of the macro-economic system. Whilst scarcity, like austerity and structural adjustment, can also be *constructed* by powerful elites, by macro-economic forces, because it is also a condition of limits (to growth), it is simultaneously *a universal condition of being in the world*. As a result of this ambiguity, scarcity is more open to alternative interpretations and to challenge the hegemonic, neoliberal notion of endless growth. As a concept it demands that we look to alternative paradigms, whether this be re-rooting ourselves back into nature or social networks, as I discuss in Chapter 5, or relearning forgotten skills, as I discuss in Chapter 4. Yet, it is also important to remember that scarcity is highly relational. Scarcity is not neutral and it is not the same for

everyone. Because scarcity is protracted across time and space, the effects of it are felt sometimes correspondingly and sometimes diversely across the two contexts.

3.2 Housing Precarity and Narratives of Agency

> *"[After spending time in Tirana, a village elder returns to the village] and the people… living there… say… 'How was Tirana, what did you see?'… and he could only say this: 'I saw… that it's better to live as a cow in the periphery of Tirana… rather than a human at the top of the mountain.'"*
> *(Interview with Besnik Aliaj, co-founder of Co-PLAN)*

In both Albania and the UK a crisis of housing has simultaneously been engineered through and by the state, as discussed in Chapter 2. In post-communist Albania crisis was also constructed by international agencies, such as the IMF and the World Bank, who, in return for loans, forced through structural adjustment policies of privatisation, price liberalisation, the reduction of trade barriers, investment deregulation and budgetary austerity (Smith, 2005). These measures, in part, caused a mass migration of people from the mountains to the plains, bringing Bathore into existence, and still continue to effect Albania in the present day where spending on infrastructure, housing and welfare is neglected.

In the UK, austerity and welfare reform is "the articulation of *new forms of social contract* enacted through housing" (my italics) (Flint, 2015: 41), whereby the splintering and reconfiguring of social housing policy has been mobilised by the government *itself*. Flint states that we are currently amidst the "broader realignment of key pillars of expectation, reciprocity, authority and responsibility that both social contract theory and the post-war welfare state were built upon" (2015: 40).

In these spaces of scarcity, housing precarity and dispossession become increasingly commonplace across the 'developed-developing' world binary. In a context of *constructed scarcity* as *lived and experienced* people are forced to

adapt and improvise in new ways to deal with uncertainty (Simone, 2004; Vasudevan, 2015b). And so everyday life amongst those in most housing need, whether in the global north, south, east or west, is often characterised by tactics akin to coping mechanisms which are used to hastily respond to changing needs and situations, as I examine through the empirical material from Newcastle later in this chapter. As a result, conceptualising constructed scarcity as opportunity and agency forming for those in the most housing need is a political minefield. In this section, through the literature on self-help and participation in housing, I examine these tensions.

3.2.1 Farewell welfare

In 1872 Engels wrote that *The Housing Question,* as he saw it to be in the hastily industrialising Western European cities of the mid nineteenth century, was concurrent with the crisis of Capitalism. For Engels, under conditions of crisis or scarcity, as induced by Capitalism, self-help is just "another kind of capitalist commodity that generates dangerous political illusions that workers can opt out of capitalist social relations or solve the problems they create by themselves" (Hodkinson, 2012: 432). Thus the anarchist belief that housing, through self-help and mutual approaches can be produced outside of the state and the market was heavily criticised by Engels. Yet, as I state in more detail later in this chapter, anarchists *agree* that housing is inseparable from capitalist market relations, yet they *also* observe the harmful, alienating and structuring role of the state and its systems of bureaucracy in housing provision, which often disincentivises and controls and is not always environmentally or socially sensitive (Hodkinson, 2012: 432). In relationship to this dispute, Hodkinson, reflecting on contemporary housing politics, writes:

> "In British housing politics, it is a tension that has produced the ultimate perversion with one part of the tenants' movement defending state housing as a democratic, affordable and secure

> tenure and the only alternative to the market; and another defending the privatisation of housing to individual tenants and seeking to exploit any opportunities for transferring public housing to tenant cooperatives and other organisations under tenant control. This divergence has weakened both causes and strengthened the hand of the privatising state" (2012: 436).

Rod Burgess (1982) revived this argument, suggesting that self-help housing must be considered within a wider, more totalising system of capitalist production and accumulation. He wrote that because self-help is so often founded upon self-reliance and the individualism inherent within the nuclear family unit, its radical potential is lost. Thus what we see is the privatisation of the housing issue (see also Harms, 1982). Burgess also criticised the self-help housing advocate John Turner, who, as I discuss later in this chapter, stated that self-help, even if arising through conditions of scarcity, gives communities control and autonomy in housing, in contrast to the mass municipal house-building solutions that were prominent in the west (and beyond) in the 1960s and 70s. Instead, Burgess stated that because of the wider structural conditions imposed on the poor by the capitalist economy, they were able to exert little control over their housing, hence the *need* to self-build (see also Harms, 1982).

We can see self-help as forced, as the only option, forged through a necessity to survive in Bathore, in a period of *'s'ka shtet, s'ka ligj'* ('there is no state, there is no law'), when welfare, services and infrastructure were floundering, when mountain life was in a state of 'managed decline'. Interviewees spoke of the "need" to migrate: "Mostly the need made people learn new things. The need for work, the need for something to do… What can you do? What can you say?"; "You needed to find a way to live by yourself now". Thus people were responding to the new conditions that had been imposed on them, thrusting them into new modes of survival. As Besnik Aliaj stated in an interview, it was a

"survival situation" in which "people had to find a solution" when the "financing [of industry and welfare] totally stopped… the state was collapsing". In this vacuum there was "unclarity about the future… There was unclarity about even issues of survival". Yet it was also a period of tentative hope, looking to a future unknown, to potential opportunities through relocation. But *choice* to embark on a new life on the outskirts of Tiranë was not mentioned in interviews. People came and built homes as a process of crisis management. And so the language of 'choice', of 'freedom' in a new capitalist world, was cruel rhetoric for the new migrants to Bathore.

This disparity between *need* and *choice,* as conceptualised by Burgess (1982), is central to the debate about scarcity, agency and autonomy in self-help and participatory housing approaches. Critics emphasise that all too often a celebration or promotion of self-help coincides with a crisis of Capitalism, therefore "self-help has, in political terms, a doubled-edged character", that confuses the "freedom to act with the necessity to survive" (Ward, 1982: 18). For Ward (1982) 'self-help' is a red herring in periods of induced scarcity, instead it "rationalises poverty", it marginalises whole populations, leaving them to merely 'exist' on the urban periphery, lacking physical and social infrastructure, which, as a result, radically limits the possibility of organised resistance to the conditions of poverty or to sustainable and well-resourced housing options (Davis, 2006).

Ward and Burgess were inevitably reacting to a shift in self-help and community participation, which moved from the margins to the mainstream in global development discourse in the 1970s, when agencies like the World Bank transformed from being direct providers of urban services and infrastructures to 'enablers' (Cohen and Leitmann, 1994). Many academics were critical of this new approach, which they felt individualised and depoliticised the problem of informality, which was largely a construction of structural adjustment (in

Albania), as well as poverty stemming from globalised forms of neoliberalism and free trade (around the world) (Harriss, 2002; Nelson, 1995). Thus there is a great contradiction here. At the same time that the World Bank was funding the upgrading programme in Bathore, it was also dedicated to a wider programme of austerity, privatisation and liberalisation in the post-socialist world, one that helped cause informality into existence in Albania. And so cause, effect and mitigation irrationally merge. The 'solution' to crisis only reproduces the crisis anew. It is thus clear why there should have been many critics of these approaches.

More recently, Ananya Roy (2011) has highlighted the rise of ideological and uncritical agency-centred accounts of informal and self-help approaches to housing (see Neuwirth, 2005; Saunders, 2010). She writes that the idea that the poor can overcome critical poverty and huge structural deficiencies to create new spaces of agency are false. She critiques Hernando de Soto (2000), the 'godfather' of slum legalisation policy (who visited Bathore in 2005 to offer advice on beginning the legalisation of the area), who calls slum dwellers "heroic entrepreneurs" - people sitting on millions of dollars worth of 'dead capital' that is just waiting to be reawakened through legalisation and the creation of a formal property market. De Soto states that, "the arduous achievements of those small entrepreneurs… have triumphed over every imaginary obstacle to create a greater part of the wealth of their society" (2000: 34). Roy highlights that within this discourse the poor are not conceptualised as desperate citizens struggling to make ends meet on the peripheral spaces of global Capitalism, but as unique economic actors, through which the spaces of informality become "zones of economic enterprise" (2011: 226). She writes that for de Soto "The 'mystery of capital' is how such dormant and defective assets can be transformed into liquid capital, thereby unleashing new frontiers of capital accumulation" (2011: 227-8). As a result, legalisation is seen to enable commodity formation in housing and land speculation, which may, in the end,

create new displacement pressures for low income groups (Burgess, 1982; Gilbert, 2002; Hodkinson, 2012; Vasudevan, 2015a). For Roy this is a narrative of 'poverty capital' – "the conversion of poverty into capital" (2011: 229) – poverty as urban economic asset.

Amin (2013) calls this ideological discourse 'human potential urbanism' - the poor envisaged as resourceful, adaptable, imaginative and inventive. This is what he terms 'telescopic urbanism' – a vision of the poor created by political and business elites which observes the city from the top down, ignoring the precariousness of daily life in the informal city. Amin writes that 'telescopic urbanism' has,

> "… no regards for the city as a social whole, it dismantles the politics of shared turf, common interest and mutual obligations, in the process negating the poor anything more than their own enclaves and efforts, exonerating the rich, powerful and influential from doing anything about slum/squatter city, and dissolving any expectation that the contract between state and society should extend to the poor, now in any case considered as resourceful" (2013: 484).

Amin states that this dissolves any expectation that the contract between state and society should be established or retained, even in its most minimal form, as it exists in Albania. As a result, it lets governments 'off the hook'. And, as Roy (2011) also recognises, it isn't just the agency of the poor that creates these new informal spaces but also the agency of the wealthy - informality is actively *produced* through the state, the police, elite development bodies, and often local mafias.

In essence then, an uncritical celebration of minimally facilitated self-help, as arising through scarcity, depoliticises the problem. To suggest that informal, collaboratively built towns overflowing with new forms of agency, where the exploitative and repressive relationships of global power and wealth are not felt, can emerge through conditions of extreme scarcity and government withdrawal is a pure rebuff of history, of politics, of people. To suggest that wasted bodies, street sleeping, a denial of existence, of violence both of and through the state can form agency is naïve at best and dangerous at worst. As I highlight in this chapter and in Chapter 6, without organisation and active political participation, the poor might be reduced to 'bargaining' for access to infrastructure, water, electricity, and other resources, sometimes through promises in return for votes (Benjamin, 2008) – and this bargaining should not be confused with reciprocity (Berlant, 2011). This is an essential point to remember for this research. As I highlight in Chapter 6, without engagement with institutions of power at some level (whether this be in collaborative partnership or in antagonism), self-help and participatory strategies can have little power and control over land, assets and resources.

3.2.2 Austerity localism

Within the UK the relations of reciprocity between state and society in housing are very different to that of Albania. A 'welfare contract', although now in a vastly reduced form, still exists. However, since the financial crisis of 2008, there has been a resurgence of community participation and agency centred approaches to housing, healthcare, schooling, local service provision and more. But often, because these approaches are situated within a context of austerity, of state cut-backs, they end up being reactionary processes of crisis management through which notions of 'community', 'localism', 'collaboration' and 'empowerment' are *used* by governments to 'off load' or transfer state responsibilities and resources to the community/voluntary sectors and then

onto individual households. Costs are cut and efficiency savings are made through the time, labour and often money of volunteers (Featherstone et al., 2012; Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012; Manzi, 2015). This is however not a new discourse, it has been mobilised at different times and by different political groups over many years (see, for example, Tony Blair's use of the 'Third Way' and the New Deal for Communities in the 2000s).

As stated in Chapter 2, the *re*-narration of the economic crisis by the Coalition Government laid the blame at the door of a bloated, domineering and costly state. This rhetoric was mobilised once again through the Conservative's 'Big Society' campaign which was built upon ideas of a *moral* and *political* crisis of excessive bureaucracy and over-centralisation of service delivery (Manzi, 2015). Thus the Big Society promised a radical shift of power in local service provision from the state to individuals, communities and the voluntary sector, coupled with a reduction in (local) state bureaucracy (Boles, 2010; Featherstone et al., 2012; Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012; Manzi, 2015) – what David Cameron called "radical decentralisation" (2009: 1).

The 2011 Localism Act was the legislation behind the Big Society and promised to offer extensive new rights to local communities. The measures set out in the Act include new rights and powers for communities and individuals (if they could, or had the inclination to exercise them), reforms to the planning system and reforms to local decisions made in relation to housing. Self and Custom Build have been heavily promoted through this Act, however this has not translated into a blossoming of this sector, nor has it offered any kind of solution to the housing crisis faced by those in precarious housing circumstances that might lack social resources (social/knowledge capital and/or time) or economic capital (physical resources and/or finance) (Barritt, 2012).

The rhetoric of the Big Society assumes that cuts and lost services (through austerity) can be compensated for by the work of local people and the (increasingly stretched) third sector. So within this climate, without already existing economic and social capital, or state support/funding inevitably poorer, urban communities less able or equipped may be excluded (Barritt, 2012). This chimes with the rather homogeneous, closed notions of community being invoked through 'Big Society' rhetoric which arguably draws upon "long-standing Conservative traditions of middle-class voluntarism and social responsibility" (Featherstone et al., 2012: 178). The localism agenda does not therefore seek to deal with the *felt and lived* crisis scenario, of lives lived not just through one crisis but many, whether this be related to health, money, food or housing, as I discuss below. As I state in Chapter 6 this would require individuals with little so-called 'social' or 'economic capital' to be fully supported through structured programmes with the local state or local agencies/charities, like that of Crisis and the workshop tutors in the Protohome project.

And so what we are witnessing is more akin to what Featherstone et al. (2012) call 'austerity localism' - "the latest mutation of neoliberalism" where the promotion of 'active citizenship' and citizen responsibilisation is at the expense of the hollowing out of the state, where, as Cameron states, "people don't always turn to officials, local authorities or central government for answers to the problems they face" (2010: no pagination). Lowndes and Pratchett write that "Cameron's version of social responsibility and his desire to create a Big Society founded on civic associationalism implies a desire to reduce the size of the state, not only in financial terms but also in terms of its scope for governance" (2012: 33). And so this *anti local state localism* (Featherstone et al., 2012; Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012).

Thus an emphasis on community agency and a celebration of self-help often goes hand in hand with political crisis or economic (constructed) scarcity. It permits the state to transfer responsibility, therefore radically shifting the welfare contract and/or reciprocal arrangement between state and citizen. Furthermore, as I state in Chapter 6, this has led some critics to suggest that the democratic accountability of the state is in question (Macleod, 2011; Macleod and Jones, 2011; Raco, 2013; Swyngedouw 2010; 2005). Yet, without falling into the trap of those that uncritically celebrate self-help as a tool of community agency, is there a way of accounting for the (often meagre) conditions under which people live, either in informal or homeless contexts, recognising that these conditions are constructed through global institutional arrangements, whilst at the same time opening up a space of possibility for new narratives of these spaces, new narratives of control and autonomy in housing, which foreground learning, capacity building and the creation of social networks for those in most need?

3.3 "The central issue is that of *control* or of the powers to *decide*"[3]: Autonomy in Housing

As stated above, one of the main Marxist critiques of an agency-centred narrative of self-help housing has been its inability to address the societal and political conditions that created the housing problem in the first place. Instead, self-help in the global south or east often acts as a palliative for people that are the worst victims of the increasing commodification of housing and land. This discourse radically problematises the relationship between scarcity and agency. However, in this section, I attempt to think beyond this discourse, and, using literature founded within an anarchist tradition, I critique the bounded and capital-centric nature of Marxist discourse, with one that foregrounds different notions of 'value' and different forms of agency. This helps to put forth a more enabling infrastructure for participatory housing, highlighting how, whilst agency and autonomy in housing might initially emerge through constructed scarcity, this may eventually forge new housing alternatives beyond that on offer from the state and the market. In a period in which the welfare state is waning and is being colonised by the private sector, this new narrative is badly needed.

In Marxist discourse 'use value' is dominated by 'exchange value'. As Burgess writes, housing must always be viewed within "processes of commodity formation" (1982: 61), where the use value of the self-built house only exists because of its exchange value. However, I suggest that this totalising Marxist narrative restricts other, more emancipatory concepts of value (Chakrabarty, 2000). Gibson-Graham (1996) have argued that there is a need to think beyond the Marxist capital-labour relation as a single, unifying system, because this subjugates and suspends imagination. It infers that we cannot try and 'chip

[3] J. Turner, *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments*, 1977: 128

away' at Capitalism through small-scale initiatives, because nothing will work, nothing will help, the system will never be transformed.

And so within participatory housing, in order to understand how agency and autonomy may emerge through scare conditions, we might foreground other concepts of value. Instead of simply conceptualising the house as a 'product' we might also perceive it as a 'process' (as I discuss below and in Chapter 4, in relationship to the work of John Turner). The house and the self-build process may be a site for social and economic reproduction, as many feminist writers have suggested, where increasingly the home, as opposed to the collective workplace, is a main site of social struggle, resistance and change (Saegert, 2016). We can see this in the rising housing activist movement in the UK where so often the initiators have been women (see *Granby 4 Streets* in Liverpool and *Focus E15 Mothers* in Newham, London in Figure 19). So the social struggle moves from the workplace to the home. Furthermore, the process of house-building might create *social*, *educational and aesthetic value*, as I foreground in Chapters 4 and 5.

Figure 19: *Focus E15 Mothers* in Newham, London. *(Source: RS21)*

So whilst Marxists conceive of housing as a *commodity product* like any other in capitalist society, whilst not denying this, anarchist and feminist writers have emphasised its use value as *both product and process* which may be inside, but may equally be outside, the sphere of market activity (Merrett, 1988: 248).

The architect John Turner has been hugely influential in recognising the wider value inherent within the process of self-build housing. His influential book *Housing by People* (1977) and the first Habitat conference in Vancouver in 1976 were the beginning of a paradigm shift for informal housing. Turner's opposition to slum destruction and support for participatory methods of slum upgrading had an influential effect on the World Bank, which was beginning to provide loans for housing projects, initially favouring 'site and service'[4] schemes that mandated self-help as I stated above. However it is important to state (because many writers have critiqued Turner for initially advocating for these schemes (Burgess, 1982; Ward, 1982)), that Turner himself expressed reservations about these structured schemes, regarding them as a significant concession towards the point of view that he had been expressing (Harris, 2003: 251). This was partly because Turner's work was founded upon the anarchist principles of self-determination, autonomy and control in housing. He argued that housing is best provided and managed by those who are to dwell in it through the self-building and self-management of housing and neighbourhoods, rather than being centrally administered by the state. He wrote that this method of housing also aided poor communities to get a foothold onto the urban economy.

Turner worked in squatter settlements in Peru during the 1960s and 70s and

[4] 'Site and service' schemes are the provision of plots of land, whether for ownership or land lease tenure, along with the essential infrastructure needed for habitation. In the 1970s the World Bank started to promote these schemes to tackle global problems of shelter.

concluded that the global north had much to learn from housing practices in the global south. He believed that the global north had forgotten the basic resources of house-building and the wider social, economic and political benefits that this offers. Turner stated that first, removing dwellers themselves from the decision-making process of their housing alienated them from the end product and second, this alienation rendered dwellers less interested in investing in, maintaining and paying for their housing (1977: 1141). Furthermore, he believed that the "ways, plans, designs and building materials" of the poor are more cost-effective, imaginative and "often far better suited to local needs, local incomes, local climatic conditions, and local resources than the official, legal standards demanded by governments" (Satterthwaite and Hardoy, 1989: 16) (as I examine in Chapter 4 in relationship to vernacular architecture). Overall, Turner was interested in *autonomy* in the design, construction *or* management of housing (Harris, 2003). This he defined as the question of 'who decides?' (Turner, 1977). Turner is not therefore implying that the poor of the world become DIY house builders (though in practice they have to be), instead "He *is* implying that they should be in control… It was on the basis of their differing 'structure[s] of authority and control' that he preferred owner-built homes, however modest, to public housing, however well built" (Harris, 2003: 248).

So Turner's interest in housing lay not just in "what it *is*, but what it *does* in people's lives" (1977: 5). Housing for Turner was not just connected to the need for shelter but also to wider household economies, social structures and the ontology of home. He wrote that, "Housing must… be used as a verb rather than as a noun – as a process that subsumes products" (1977: 62). Thus it is the *practice* of housing that is important here and how housing can be a means of forging autonomy. As I have seen in Bathore, and as I examine in the proceeding chapters, when housing is a tool for learning, the building of sociality, as well as a mechanism for advocating and activating change, it is

most effective. So this demands, as Turner states, examining what housing *does* in people's lives. This means thinking of housing not as a static object but as a process, that has wider social and economic value. I examine this idea in more detail in Chapter 4 in relationship to the idea of *building/learning-as-dwelling* and housing as a continuous process.

Whilst Turner's work provides good *signs on a route* to thinking about more autonomous and agency centred accounts and practices of housing, it is also important that the role of the state and other external agencies, such as charities (as in the case of Crisis in the Protohome project) and agencies (such as Co-PLAN in Bathore) are not forgotten in participatory housing approaches. As I state in Chapter 6, the local state in particular, vastly emaciated as it is in the UK, still has a key role to play, due to the complex nature of participatory housing. Local authorities are needed to help groups/communities to acquire land, funding and support. Furthermore, high level political support for new community-led forms of housing are necessary if projects are going to move beyond pilots, and are able to be replicated. However, as I argue, and as Turner believed, it is the *nature of the relationship between* the community/participatory housing practitioner and the state/agency that is important.

With Turner's focus on autonomy in mind, I now wish to strengthen my argument regarding dweller control of housing by referring to the empirical material from the Protohome project. Firstly, I consider the growing inadequacy of the contemporary welfare state and the new subjectivities created through it for people in most housing need, under conditions of constructed scarcity/austerity. This critique of the welfare state (which is at once an increasingly threadbare safety net and at the same time a mechanism of control), is central to thinking beyond the tensions between scarcity and agency. This is needed in order to put forward new housing typologies that are

beyond the state or the market. Secondly, in the last part of this chapter, I analyse different forms of agency, and highlight how opportunities for new housing realities, as well as collective resistance to housing precarity, might be forged through self-help and participatory approaches.

3.4 New Subjectivities of Welfare

Many people in the UK are still reliant on what has now become a rather skeletal welfare state. Yet it seems that there will be no end to the gradual chipping away of this over the coming years, so much so that we seriously need to consider whether we are looking towards a post (state) welfare society. Arguably, welfare Capitalism has always been characterised by the tension between universal benefits tied to a universal notion of social citizenship, and, increasingly, carefully targeted systems of aid and incentive "designed to prop up specific social issues, from the workplace to the street to the home" (Frase, 2014). But within housing, although social housing was never designed to be universal - seemingly the 'wobbly pillar' (Torgersen, 1987) of the welfare state, as I highlighted in Chapter 2, nowhere can we see the retrenchment and residualisation of welfare and the 'roll out' of new opportunities for capital more prominently than in this sector (Hodkinson and Robbins, 2012).

And so if this is the case then how do we look beyond the welfare state? Can we? Should we? And what should our critique be based upon? In this section I offer a critical narrative of the current welfare state through the eyes of the Protohome group members in order to understand how it structures agency for those at the hard end of austerity.

3.4.1 Responsibility individualised

As I have highlighted, one of the central critiques of self-help housing (as emerging through constructed scarcity), is that it shifts responsibility from the state to the individual. This research has witnessed this devolvement of responsibility, most prominently in the case of Bathore. But in the UK increasing responsibilisation has been one outcome of 'austerity localism' (Featherstone et al., 2012) and welfare reform. This research has uncovered countless narratives

of individual burden, of people trying to 'make do' alone, often in extremely isolated conditions. Whilst in Bathore there was a certain connection between privatism and self-help, where the burden was often placed on the family, as opposed to the community (Davies and Pill, 2012: 2200), in the case of the Protohome group members, the burden of scarcity is largely individualised, with people relying on a mix of 'barely there' state support, and, increasingly, more informal support from churches and local charities (Johnsen, 2014).

Yet even where welfare and charitable institutions exist, there is a real ambiguity within them. They are at once sources of security and freedom, whilst also instruments of social control, where dependency, reliance, conditionality and control collide (Lipietz, 1992). Thus a real sense of paternalism permeates from them. Through austerity, with the welfare contract fragmenting, we can see both a devolvement of responsibility, as well as growing levels of control, where non-participation is seen as non-compliance (Cleaver, 1999). These themes emerged repeatedly throughout the course of the Protohome project. Group members spoke about endless meetings at the Jobcentre, employability courses, threats of sanctions, unpaid benefit. Clearly, for them, the 'social contract' is now performing as mechanism of control - the contractual and reciprocal relationship between giver and receiver is increasingly in the state's hands. And so issues and instabilities in individuals' lives which may, at one time, have been mitigated (or attempted to be) through the welfare state (which is often now provided by the third sector), are now individualised and internalised, shifted to the domains of the psychological and the bodily (Habermas, 1981). And inevitably within this story, precarity produces *even more* dependency on the state, and thus reproduces mechanisms of control. Lauren Berlant states that "At root, precarity is a condition of dependency - as a legal term, *precarious* describes the situation where your tenancy on your land is in someone else's hands" (2011: 192). So, at times, dependency on the state seemed like a false choice for many of the members of our group.

This sentiment came forth through group discussions in the Protohome workshop about the experience of the hostel as a site of circulation - what group members called the 'hostel circuit'. Many members stated that hostels have become a 'dumping ground' for people that need mental health and substance abuse care, or support from the (vastly reduced) probation services (Cloke et al., 2010). One member of our group said, "They're bail hostels, basically". Many group members had been, or were, living in these interstitial spaces. What emerged through discussions were personal stories of sleepless nights, stress, fear, pent up frustration, drug and alcohol abuse. As individuals spoke, their stories fed into each other, experiences were shared, group members finished off each other's sentences. The hostel emerged through our conversations as a site of collective recognition. Group members spoke about the everyday mechanisms of control, the behavioural regulations inside hostels, and the similarity between the hostel and the prison. Rose and Miller (1992) call these sites spaces of 'regulated freedom'. This excerpt from our conversation emphasises the experience of these spaces:

Daz: "Like a cell."

Sam: "Like cameras, like a prison basically."

Nyree: "It's like an institution."

Peter: "Aye, cameras everywhere."

Daz: "It's a big brother prison."

Peter, one of our group members, who has been in and out of hostels and on and off the streets for the last twenty years told the group about the regular

routine of the hostel, how everyday actions such as eating, washing clothes, entering and exiting the hostel were tied to a strict timetable. These regulations, for Peter, were devices of behavioural control, as this story of him discussing eating and washing schedules with a hostel employee iterates:

> "'You can't give me three Weetabix, or a couple of extra slices of bread? I'm hungry, I'm starving I'm a big eater, that's why I'm here for me breakfast'. 'No no no, we can't give you three Weetabix, we can't give you three bits of bacon' and all this. And then I went, 'Ah, I've missed me washing day' - 'cause you only have one day a week when you can do yer washing - half a day - and I went, 'I missed me washing day the other day, is there any chance of going into the laundry?' 'Nah you can't, you've got to stick to your allotted laundry time which is just once a week and if you miss it you've got to wait til the following week'".

Although this narrative seems insignificant, it is the control of small, everyday actions and practices that made this account so frustrating for Peter. Eventually he found more freedom in life on the streets, where he could eat and sleep when and where he wanted. But his is a specific case. He is someone that has roots in the fabric of the city, who prides himself on knowing every crevice, every rhythm of the city as it turns from day to night and back to day again, as I describe below. He lives life more akin to a nomad. But his life becomes much more difficult in the colder months, or when he comes face to face with the punitive city, having his belongings taken, or when the noise and speed of the city tires and dominates him.

Another group member, Nyree, who, due to illness, was evicted from her house and slept in her car until the MOT ran out finally entered local homeless services through a medical centre for homeless people, which directed her to a

women's hostel. Nyree's story is not a typical story of homelessness (although it is perhaps becoming more common). She referred to herself as 'middle class homeless', someone who had lived a relatively stable and wealthy life until the break up of her marriage and health problems led her into a spiral of debt. Nyree's life, like others in the group, was heavily regulated through agencies of support such as the hostel and the Jobcentre. On one occasion in the Protohome workshop Nyree was upset by a recent trip to the Jobcentre. She spoke about being treated badly by the advisor there, who made her feel like a 'scrounger'. The narrative below goes to the heart of the modern day Jobcentre experience - the notion of keeping 'clients' busy looking for often non-existent jobs, in order to *earn* their benefits. The space of the Jobcentre emerges as one where obligation, responsibility and control merge (Rosenthal and Peccei, 2007):

> "I had the most awful Jobcentre appointment I've had yet… it was horror. It was like a long one hour session and [I was] just grilled at every point and nothing I was doing was right, and I do my 40 hours, and I do more than my 40 hours and I document it, but this one [Jobcentre advisor], she had a bee in her bonnet about it… Because I have to do 40 hours a week and I have to have evidence of every minute, *every minute* of looking for jobs and I have to record it, *every minute*".

The repetition of "every minute" and "40 hours" highlights the necessity to keep benefit recipients busy, of filling time, making them provide pages of 'evidence' each week, paperwork that will never be read, comments that will never be considered, just to prove that they are keeping their side of the 'bargain' with the state. Nyree was fully aware of the increasing conditionalities on welfare stating, "It's about targets and it's about suppression and it's about making you get to the end of your tether, so… that they don't sign". She said,

"It's the hardest… the horriblest job I've ever had in my life is being on the dole 'cause they've changed all the goalposts". This "changing of the goalposts" is important here, the constant change in the system, so you're not sure what you're supposed to do, what the 'requirements' are, and thus mistakes are easily made. She also admitted that her experience of the Jobcentre had been "disabling, kind of institutional". It is evident that within the welfare system increasing importance is now placed on 'the abstract numbers game' - the 'public' or the 'welfare recipient' increasingly being constituted through technocratic means and numerics, through cost-benefit analysis and economically charged notions of value (Durrant, 2015). Habermas (1981) highlights that the welfare state was a mechanism to bring state and society together, yet increasingly, the public sphere has been squeezed out, transformed into a site of self-interested contestation for the resources of the state rather than a space for the development of a real public. He thus regards the increasing rationalisation and colonisation of the lifeworld by bureaucracies and market-forces as contributing to the decay of the public sphere.

These experiences emphasise how structures of governance increasingly dominate and shape social life, creating new subjectivities through welfare instruments in the process (Foucault, 2008). Here this is grounded in endless tasks, job searches, employability courses and workfare schemes (Cloke et al., 2010; Ling, 2000; Raco, 2013). But as May et al. (2005) state, it is not just the creation of new *public* subjectivities but new subjectivities of *welfare providers*, which/who reinforce certain behaviours associated with 'responsible' citizenship. Clearly, with some of our participants, this surfaced through feelings of shame and guilt, as this quote from Nyree testifies:

> "But there's something about when you muck up and you make mistakes and you end up in a hostel, no matter how well meaning

> the staff are, that you're then treated as someone that has problems and that can't be trusted to get back themselves".

There is a hint in Nyree's quote that perhaps she feels that she hasn't kept up her side of the 'bargain' with the state. Does this guilt stem from an old and perhaps rather nostalgic notion of the paternal state - that the state will prop you up in hard times - whilst it is fast dissolving in your hands (Berlant, 2011)?

The centre of this debate in housing can be found in Hodkinson's quote above, in which he discusses the tension between defending council housing at the same time as emphasising the sometimes debilitating effects of state housing provision, and through this, highlighting that better and more egalitarian housing models are possible. Clinging on to old notions of the social contract, or the belief that the state can and should build new council housing is understandable, especially in a period in which state-supported housing is under threat, but it is erroneous to plant blind faith in this idea. The old notions and norms of reciprocity between state and society have been blasted apart as a result of government decisions taken in response to the banking crisis. And so the presupposition that state intervention through a form of 'social democracy' can insure a peaceful co-existence between democracy and Capitalism is unfounded (Habermas, 1981). Furthermore, as Berlant suggests, we cannot keep attempting to "to sustain optimism for irreparable objects. The compulsion to repeat a toxic optimism can suture someone or a world to a cramped and unimaginative space of committed replication, *just in case* it will be different" (2011: 259). These ideas are now harmful in their absence-presence (Raynor, 2017). There is thus a necessity to detach from old notions of the social contract and begin the "bruising processes of detachment from anchors in the world" (Berlant, 2011: 263) because the welfare state will not re-emerge, will not be *put back*. This is no longer a realistic narrative. And furthermore, in housing terms, should we not be *demanding more* than what

the welfare state offered us? Moreover, as I have highlighted above, what if the welfare state does not provide for you? What if you have fallen through the net, because the net has gaping holes in it? And in the context of the argument in this chapter, how can agency be returned to those that are the victims of the state and/or the market?

Observing embedded processes of self-help, like those witnessed in Bathore, and how collective agency and autonomy might emerge from these spaces may aid in thinking *beyond* the welfare state - to use the knowledge garnered here as *emergent signs on a route* to local and collective forms of mutualism (Kropotkin, 1902; Ward, 2004; 1984; 1973). But advocating for more co-operative and mutual approaches to housing, might mean being open to new housing typologies, organisational structures or value systems, as I examine in the following chapters.

3.5 Induced and Catalytic Agency

In the last section of this chapter I conceptualise the different forms of agency that may emerge through conditions of scarcity. I first examine *induced agency* (akin to coping mechanisms) - actions employed quickly to deal with a crisis situation, which may be fleeting – like managing addiction or hunger. *Induced agency*, formed through many crises layered upon each other, might never move beyond strategies of hastily 'making do'. However, in other cases these mechanisms might become *catalytic*, stimulating friendships, support networks and wider processes of learning. They might offer routes out of poverty, or at least enable individuals to take some form of control over their lives, meagre resources and/or city space in an increasingly hostile welfare sphere. So, in this case *induced agency* can become *catalytic agency*, or, after De Certeau (1980 [2011]), *tactics*. Whilst these actions may initially be improvised, they may also be highly skilled and adaptive. Furthermore, as well as creating new visions and opportunities for living through scarcity and marginality, they may also lead to organised, political and collectivised action, which is able to fight for wider structural change within housing.

By examining these embedded knowledges and practices - often formed through processes of 'making do' - whether these occur on the street or through the house-building process – I can begin to form a more multi-faceted account of agency, and how this agency might be systematically employed to bring forth new approaches to housing for those in the most housing need.

3.5.1 Induced agency

Berlant states that in scenarios of lived and felt crisis people are forced to "suspend ordinary relations of repair and flourishing" (2011: 49) and realise that repair might be a long way off, or might never come. People might be forced

into a mere repetition of actions to keep going, in order to starve off defeat, from hunger, from social breakdown. We can see elements of this sentiment in the lives of Protohome group members, where induced scarcity often translated into felt and lived crises. Often crisis was a constantly unfolding scenario which had to be renegotiated daily, often through the mechanisms of the state, such as the Jobcentre or the housing/homelessness department of the council or through the myriad of charities, churches and agencies. But the informal support networks of the street were equally important to Protohome group members, as were what Fairbanks (2012) calls the 'informal poverty politics', the self-help tactics, that are growing in the 'shadow welfare state'. These informal mechanisms, which are employed to access money, food, shelter, alcohol or drugs, were a prominent part of discussions in the Protohome workshop. Below, one of our group members reflects on the cyclical nature of his daily life begging for legal highs:

> "Every morning I was waking up at 5 o'clock in the morning, thinking, right, the first thing on me mind was legal high. I'm getting me sleeping bag out and I'm gannin' down the town to make it. Get me stuff, get back in the house, that's gone, I need to get back out and get some more. Like a revolving circle every morning waking up at 5 o'clock. Bang, out the door. Gannin' to the gallery and sittin' down".

Other stories and conversations revolved around illegal activity such as stealing from The Pound Shop, tagging city walls, but, equally, these stories were also about informal networks of care and support. When one of our members, a vulnerable young man, went back on the streets, another member, Daz, looked out for him:

> "There's a lot of people that look after him in the town and all 'cause there was word gannin' round that he's a wrong 'un, but then me and me other pals put everybody straight about it - so that's cleared that up yer see?"

And so the networks through which 'word' or information travels are important for homeless individuals. These networks are also vital for sharing practical information on the best hostels, soup kitchens, health centres and support agencies.

Nyree described meeting a homeless man who, whilst walking her back to her hostel, shared street practices and knowledges with her:

> "… he was picking up bottles that were on the fence and… half bottles of Lucozade, checking [they] were alright. He was taking money from parking meters, he was looking around… He was giving me all these tips".

And so these ways of 'making do' might forge social networks and shared knowledges that help people to exist in precarious circumstances. As Jackson writes in her ethnography of a homeless day centre, "Paths converge, go their separate ways, and then cross again" (2015: 122). She writes that "Being 'wrapped together'… isn't inevitable but can be a temporary coping mechanism, a tactic; a way of being with others that makes a difficult situation liveable" (2015: 121-122). Furthermore, Cloke et al. (2008) describe the performativity of social relations in their work charting journeys of homeless people through Bristol. They show how homeless people form complex social networks involving peer group cooperation (see also Rowe and Wolch, 1990). Drawing upon non-representational theory (Thrift, 2008; 1996; Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000) they emphasise the seemingly insignificant moments between

people which oscillate between generosity, anger, sociability (both rehearsed and spontaneous), hope and fear, to create an ethnography that speaks of emotion and affect. They write that a sense of humanity can be crucial for homeless people, both in an immediate, practical way – such as finding out where hostel/food services are and getting immediate help in a dangerous situation – as well as those that can lead to deeper relationships between people. They write that this potential social cohesion between people moves beyond 'rational tactics' that homeless people use to 'get by' in the city, instead these moments of care are governed by emotion and the need for support and friendship. As I state in Chapter 5, whilst care and compassion occurred in the Protohome workshop, these bonds extended beyond this site and out into the city. Forming bonds in this way helps to provide some kind of ontological security in what can be highly unstable or isolated situations (Jackson, 2015: 119). So whilst these might be momentary or fleeting actions, they can lead to more sustained relationships or friendships that extend beyond the 'here and now'.

However it is also worth questioning the toxic nature of such connections. The relationship between Daz and the young member of our group, as I discussed above, occurred through need – through drug addiction - so can this 'meshing' or 'wrapping together' of people and experience have both negative and positive consequences? For Daz, he found himself falling back into old habits and only eventually came out of the circle of drug abuse after hospitalisations, arrests and jeopardising family networks. Thus there will always be ambiguities bound up in these relationships.

3.5.2 Induced agency and urban tactics

The quotes above also highlight that there are attachments to, and uses of, certain spaces in the city. Ruddick (1996; 1990) draws attention to homeless

people as social subjects who make claims on city space and re-form it for new uses. She highlights how homeless people not only *use* urban space but *produce* urban space (see also Jackson, 2015) and contrasts the victimisation of homeless people with their tenacity to cope - highlighting their creativity in deploying a range of 'place-making devices'. These devices are what Cloke et al. call the "micro-architectures of the city" (2010: 8) - the tacit ways of knowing the geographies of the city, the spaces in between the hostel, the health centre and the soup kitchen. Agency produced in this way can also be identity forming, it can be a catalyst for other meanings, practices and interests that might keep one going on the streets beyond the repetition of survivalist actions.

As I mentioned above, Peter, one of our group members, lives on the streets. His life there revolves around scavenging for objects and materials, swapping and dealing, recycling and transforming them into new objects and 'storing' them in various places around the city. A certain amateurish tinkering with materials forms his identity on the street. Once Protohome was built, it became for Peter, a site of social reproduction, a stop-off, another place to go en route to somewhere else. He would bring things he found for the house – a lamp, a single window blind, a teddy for the bookshelf, a dictionary of medical terms, children's books, a set of drawers, two deckchairs. In the Protohome workshop on a Monday morning he would tip out a yellow Cash Convertor's bag onto the workbench and reveal an assortment of bits and pieces, fragments and parts – a broken watch, a broken lighter, lost keys, a credit card, Bassett's sweets (a new variety), two sachets of McDonald's brown sauce, a broken box of Swan Vestas, two Kinder plastic eggs, a candle found in the bins at the back of TK Maxx, unwanted flowers left by someone on the street (see Figure 20). But for Peter it is not just the collection of objects that is important but the transformation of them – the *recycling* of street materiality for new uses, which might be for aesthetic value or for exchange purposes. When I saw an old champagne cork,

Peter saw a keyring, when I saw a fragment of material, Peter saw a curtain, and when Peter went back on the streets he would speak about setting up home on a roundabout and making a bed out of pallets, using glow sticks for lights.

Figure 20: Peter's things.

For Peter this amateurish tinkering does not only arise out of a certain resourcefulness developed through scarcity, it also arises out of an innate creativity, as this quote from him suggests:

> "Knowing that something's not getting wasted and that I've done something with something that would normally go in the bin… It also makes you happy as well. Well, it makes me happy it does… I'm making key chains out of bike chains… I'm separating the links and then where the link hole is you put yer key in and then hammer it shut again and there's the key ring… Fridge magnets out of bottle tops and champagne corks I'm making key rings with… I get them really strong magnets from the bookies and you melt them with a

> lighter, get the magnet out and use a bottle top or you can use lead… what I do is I get the lead from round roundabouts off car wheels, them little blocks of lead, so I find everything. And I melt the little blocks of lead down and turn them into magnets and… stick them on people's fridges".

Peter can thus look past the main function or purpose of a particular material to see the hidden possibilities.

The majority of houses around the world are built in this makeshift manner, using materials at hand – grass, straw, mud or earth or the detritus of modern industry - steel sheet materials, packing cases, oil drums, cardboard, plastic sheeting, wooden pallets – and transforming them into new forms with new uses. This is an adaptable approach - a kind of 'makeshift urbanism' (McFarlane, 2011b) - what de Certeau (1980 [2011]) might have called 'bricolage' – 'tactics' of making do. These ordinary and tacit forms of urban learning – the different ways of knowing, decoding, coordinating and sensing the city - are therefore coping mechanisms that become catalysts for wider interests and practices (Blom Hansen and Verkaaik, 2009; McFarlane, 2011b). And so urban spaces are interpreted and reappropriated through different tacit forms of intuition and knowing. But these seemingly improvisatory tactics are not always spontaneous, instead they are learnt over time (McFarlane, 2011b). Peter has learnt ways of living on the street through his social connections to people and his physical knowledge of the city - the routes and rhythms of the city, the nooks and crannies in which he stores belongings. These actions are put to work through ordinary and everyday practices of dwelling in the city. McFarlane (2011a; 2011b) calls this 'urban tactical learning', when amateurish, 'make do' practices emerge from scarcity. Practices that may become identity forming (as in the case of Peter) and which may allow for some facet of control and agency over city life.

3.5.3 Catalytic agency and urban tactics

Instead of 'poverty politics' I would describe the actions described above as having the potential to become *tactics* (De Certeau, (1980 [2011]). For De Certeau, tactics are actions made in the present without knowing how they will contribute to future forms of flourishing. These tactics may help people with less power to take more control over their existence, as De Certeau states: "Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of *plurality* and creativity. By an art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation" (1980 [2011]: 30). And so tactics are how people 'get by' and 'make do' in ordinary life – how they use practical knowledge of how things work, whether this be of political systems, social systems or practical mechanisms, like electricity systems or how to dig a well in the ground (as I saw in Bathore). There is thus an everyday-ness to them. But importantly, tactics are used to cope with uncertainty. Tactics are thus often improvised. This improvisation is forced upon people in situations where the welfare state is absent, or not functioning. But tactics can also be transformational. They don't end with the action. Whilst they may *begin* with simple, improvised actions, gradually they may become more sustained and, importantly, connect to other tactics and actions, becoming collectively organised and gaining real political and social weight.

However, not all of these actions become tactics or more catalytic forms of agency – sometimes they never graduate from being minute by minute coping mechanisms – methods to relieve the daily pains of life, or the physical pains of addiction. Sometimes these actions worsen a crisis and sometimes these actions can't become tactics because of structural forces of governmentality that controls and subjugates movement and life on the streets. And as Berlant

states, what we might celebrate as human agency, might actually be "coerced relation in which good manipulative skills can feel like agency" (2011: 173) where "the work of the reproduction of life absorbs most of the energy and creativity people have" (2011: 168). And so it is important to remember that because these actions are mechanisms of survival borne from exclusion and poverty they are tenuous and ambiguous. In the Protohome project I found that because many people are consistently trying to adapt to a changing welfare state (for example, Universal Credit was just emerging during the project), the agency formed through their actions is differential. Whilst some manage the system and (re)negotiate it, others flounder because of it. This may depend on a range of factors, such as age, gender, ethnicity, personal history, and whether an individual can access social and institutional support networks.

But, equally, as I stated above, these tactics can transform from processes of 'making do' into *catalytic* forms of agency. They can be translated to be used in other contexts (McFarlane, 2011b). The agency and knowledge built through these tactics, if harnessed within a supportive environment through directed processes of learning, collectivisation, action and organisation, can become opportunities – they can forge change (De Certeau, 1980 [2011]: xix).

We can see this in the case of Bathore. When migrants first moved to Bathore they responded hastily to their homelessness, rapidly marking the ground and building shacks to live in, digging holes to access water, appropriating electricity from a nearby dairy. But as these tactics were sustained, (and supported by Co-PLAN) the agency formed through them was nurtured collectively, and could then be reproduced, to form stronger community bonds, allowing residents to make claims through formal political mechanisms (as I examine in Chapter 6). Thus, in Bathore the agency that arose through tactics of need also created the shared fibre of community – a kind of associational life – and new reciprocal welfare networks, such as employment support,

foodbanks, schooling arrangements and mutual savings groups, as this quote from one of the early volunteer teachers in Bathore testifies:

> "With my colleagues we made a kind of savings bank… At the start we each gave one of the women [the equivalent of] $10, so that week the woman had $100 and it went round in the circle like this. It was like a savings bank. There were 10 people, so when I took the $100 I was able to make the windows and doors of my house".

Forms of *catalytic agency* can thus activate new communal ways of living - sustained tactics that are organised, collectivised and politicised, and which can challenge and change structural constraints. This can be seen in Bathore in 1995 when residents used their collective power and agency to fight against the demolition of homes and to press the state for policy change regarding informality (see Figure 21) (as I examine in more detail in Chapter 6). And so initial, everyday tactics of occupying land and constructing ad hoc homes, can disturb, undermine and challenge the status quo, and put pressure on the state for the redistribution of resources (Fiori and Ramirez, 1992).

Figure 21: Newspaper clippings reporting protests in Bathore in 1995.

Thus it is the nature in which the agency is deployed that is important and how agency translates from one context to another. Furthermore, it is when agency is collectivised that it has real opportunity to challenge and change the imbalances of power in housing, by redistributing power and giving wider access to resources, and exerting pressure for policy change. And so, as I examine in detail in Chapters 5 and 6, it is often the *relationships between people* that are key to this (Kropotkin, 1902; Landauer, 1990) - how people work together, how they learn from each other, how they problem solve - practices that I have witnessed throughout the course of this research.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, through the literature on self-help and informal housing and drawing on an anarchist framework, I have examined the tensions inherent in connecting scarcity and agency. Recognising that participation in housing is not always an intentional political act, but often mere acts of desperation, or coping mechanisms, I have also sought to move beyond these critiques, through a discussion of *induced* and *catalytic* forms of agency. As a result this chapter tends to the first research question which queries how learning in house-building might travel from Albania to the UK in a period of scarcity. This chapter has highlighted the importance of the context of scarcity to my overall argument in this thesis, and the opportunities for new housing typologies to emerge in spite of this context.

Utilising the empirical material from Newcastle to foreground a critique of the contemporary welfare state, I have discussed how people show their agency through scarcity, from 'making do', from 'holding on', from building through the mess, the destruction and the pivotal changes, and how autonomy over urban space might forge new types of 'place-making devices' (Ruddick, 1996; 1990) - transforming environments for unintended purposes. Whilst these mechanisms of survival, what I call *induced agency*, may only transpire as new ways of clinging onto the frail threads of a net whose holes are getting wider and wider, equally, they may also translate into *catalytic agency*, becoming *tactics,* which may imagine and form new housing realities, as Berlant suggests: "there are situations where managing the presence of a problem/event that dissolves the old sureties and forces improvisation and reflection on life-without-guarantees is a pleasure and a plus, not a loss" (2011: 200). So the small (or large) fissures, the self-help techniques of the migrants coming to Bathore, might not first arise as heroic acts of refusal to exist in a system that only offers lack, but they may eventually translate into acts of collective agency where *political practices* of collective self-help might rethink relations in and of

the city, and with and through the process of house-building. New urban futures and ways of doing housing might emerge from these extremities of human existence and within the spatial extremities of the city. These new futures might not *wholly* point to 'better' ways to create communities and build housing in a time of scarcity, at times they might instead appear as merely scavenging for survival. Nevertheless, some of these productive practices of improvisation in the city might provide *emergent signs on a route* to better urban futures. They might provide the tools to deal with scarcity and in the process forge new housing futures. As a result this discussion of scarcity and agency contributes to wider debates about housing precarity (either in periods of *constructed* 'austerity'/'structural adjustment', or ecological scarcity of resources and materials) by examining how scarcity, when conceptualised as an on-going condition of life, may be a useful tool in thinking beyond the normative modes of state/third sector housing or unaffordable/unregulated private sector housing for low income people.

In the following three chapters I examine in detail how this agency was put to work, whether this be through the physical house-building process (see Chapter 4) and the social ties that were forged through this (see Chapter 5), or through the transformation of wider structural mechanisms (see Chapter 6).

Chapter 4: Housing as a Verb

4.1 Introduction

If, as I suggested in Chapter 3, that scarcity may be connected to new informal urban materialities and perhaps spatial autonomy, then what form does this take? Does it bring forth new architectural typologies? If these forms are chaotic, unplanned, messy and unruly, are there uses to this disorder (Sennett, 1970)? And in order to deal with scarcity, do we need to relearn our own normative practices of city making? If so, how do we go about this?

This chapter builds upon John Turner's (1977) notion of 'housing as a verb' – that the importance of housing is not what it *is* but what it *does* in people's lives. I do this by examining the process of house construction in Bathore and Newcastle. This chapter thus tends to my second research question which asks: what new forms of building processes may emerge through processes of translation/resonance which are participatory and have learning at their centre? Through tending to this broader query I open up a discussion into the questions that I opened this chapter with. In so doing I disturb inherited binaries of architect-user, professional-amateur, rational-experimental, thinking-doing and building-dwelling. Inevitably this requires thinking pluralistically and beyond normative (western) house-building processes. But the unsettling of these dichotomies is central both to the practice of participatory housing, where the prospective resident is designer, builder and manager, as well as my engagement with the theories and practices of post-colonialism and Participatory Action Research (PAR).

In the first section of this chapter I examine the top-down nature of the production of the urban realm, with a specific focus on the UK context (which I wish to inform). I then counter this through the work of Jane Jacobs (1961

[1992]) and Richard Sennett (2006; 1970) and traditions of 'open planning'. However, whilst recognising the need for more 'open' planning systems and bottom-up approaches to development, I also highlight that there is a tension within this approach. As I go on to argue in Chapter 6, there is always a need for forms of rationalism within participatory housing processes, whether this be in the form of a design/plan or the need to engage with individuals and groups in positions of institutional power. However, as I highlight, it is both the nature of these relationships, as well as the flexibility and openness of the plan that is important. Here I argue for a more responsive approach to urban development, and as such, I examine how a process based approach to housing, which foregrounds flexibility and adaptability, can offer new notions and practices of housing in conditions of real or constructed scarcity. I conceptualise this as *building/learning-as-dwelling* (Ingold, 2000; McFarlane, 2011a), where the building is not separate from the dwelling but they happen at once and together. This expanded sense of dwelling offers a renewed focus not just on what housing *is,* but what it *does* in people's lives (Turner, 1977).

The chapter then moves onto a discussion of the vernacular. I foreground the vernacular not only to highlight and promote building typologies that are rooted in people and place but also to connect to a concept of 'vernacular values' (Illich, 1980) to rethink the ontology of home as one that is connected and rooted within identity and potentials for learning and human flourishing, rather than housing as a mere commodity product. I conceptualise the vernacular not as static or stuck in time, but one that is in flux, that responds to changing structural and social forces. I argue that the informal should be seen as the new and most extensive form of vernacular, which makes use of locally made/found materials and responds to changing social and economic structures.

The second half of the chapter examines these themes through the empirical evidence from Bathore and Newcastle. I examine how in Bathore, the process of learning to build connected to old knowledges of house-building gained during Communism. I highlight that these practices, when they became spatially distanciated, *shifted* to fit a new context, using new materials and processes. I also examine how the incremental process of building (through the use of the 'core house') connects both to economic scarcity as well as to residents' hopes and future plans.

Lastly, I examine processes of learning and building in the Protohome workshop. I reflect upon thinking and doing as activities that entwine together, where learning by repetition, trial, error and failure can be productive. I also connect the Segal system of building – a simple and affordable building method for untrained self-builders - to an idea of 'convivial tools' (Illich, 1973). These are tools and processes which are cheap to acquire/learn and easy to use. I argue that the concept of 'convivial tools' offers a way to propose new (old) building typologies in conditions of scarcity.

4.2 Rationalism and Disorder

4.2.1 The brittle city

In western modern architecture and planning discourse there has always been a strong rationalist core. From Haussman's redevelopment of Paris and the gridiron of Chicago to the mass slum clearances of the 1960s and the 'regeneration' of waterfronts, bringing the middle class back into the city and chiming an end to the industrial 'backwater'. More recently this can be seen in the new towers rising above Piccadilly Station in Manchester and the flattening of council estates in the east end of London, making way for luxury apartments financed by foreign investment. The latter phenomenon is very much connected to an ethos of city boosterism, of places as investment spaces, whereby so-called 'global cities' (Glaeser, 2011; Sassen, 1991) are transformed not based upon the cultural or social reality of a particular place, but on the grand glass and steel visions of 'StarArchitects'. These 'world-class' cities are visualised as engines of economic growth - competitive and entrepreneurial, attracting and bringing forth outside 'innovation', investment and 'talent' (Harvey, 1989; Ward, 2008; 2003).

But there is also the flipside. Those cities deemed to be persistently 'catching up' in both economic and material terms, (like the 'secondary' towns and cities of Sunderland, Middlesbrough and Gateshead in the north-east), must compete over the leftovers, scrambling for any kind of development, particularly when local authorities are hard pressed, as during austerity. Instead of 'StarArchitects', these places get plastic cladded catalogue architecture, 'Tesco Town' developments and shopping centres for city centres (see Figure 22).

Likewise, in Albania Tiranë is currently amidst large-scale redevelopment projects in its urban core. Flash skyscrapers and 'mixed-use' developments rise above Tiranë's horizon and the well-known Italian architect, Stefano Boeri, has

just completed a new masterplan for the city. Boeri's plan, entitled 'Project TR030', is a strategic, top-down vision of the city, where public-private partnerships are sold as "visionary" and a means to build "the public city" which is able to compete on the 'world stage' (TR030, 2016). The plan, however, is highly vague in terms of implementation and costings, thus it seems removed from what is possible and also further removed from the lived and experienced city (van Gerven Oei, 2017). Tiranë's (and Albania's) government seems to be buying into a largely westernised vision of the 'aspirational', 'growth machine' (Molotch, 1976) city. It is also questionable whether these plans for luxury apartments and mixed-use developments will have any resonance in other Albanian cities, and furthermore, with residents living on the fringes of Tiranë. This begs the questions: In whose interests will these developments take place? Through whose eyes is this imagined future envisioned?

And back in the UK, even those cities that convincingly offer the illusion of wealth and growth often have, beyond their centres, amputated areas, areas cut off and in decline. And within urban centres the privatisation of public space continues, threatening the use and appropriation of urban space, bound as it often is in a mix of rules and regulations prohibiting buskers, protesters, loiterers, beggars and smokers. This is another form of governmentality, where the urban realm controls human behaviour, regulating life and creating regularised citizens, as I stated in Chapter 2 in relation to the regulation of homeless people through Public Space Protection Orders.

Figure 22: Trinity Square, Gateshead. Developed by Spenhill Developments, Tesco's development arm.

In UK housing policy a language of economic efficiency, of outputs, targets, rewards and risks persists (Malpass, 2005; Morison, 2000). Social housing providers, as well as local authorities, as I state in Chapter 6, must now be competitive, entrepreneurial machines, output framed and cost saving (Malpass, 2005), whilst residents are recast as consumers, clients and customers, who require more choice (Malpass, 2005: 11). This logic has become even more hegemonic since the financial crash of 2008, and is bound to become even more so as a result of the 2016 Housing and Planning Act (see Chapter 2) and the negative effect it will have on housing associations' abilities to balance their books. Furthermore, through 'joint venture partnerships' local authorities do deals with volume house builders and huge, delocalised housing associations, to build estates upon estates of identikit homes, rarely providing the quota of affordable homes needed and required by local planning policy

and using Financial Viability Assessments[5] to argue that providing affordable housing in their schemes would make development 'unfeasible' (Colenutt, 2015; Wainwright, 2015). Furthermore, in March 2017, a survey for Shelter found that 51 per cent of owners of recent new build homes have experienced problems with construction, fittings and/or utilities (Jefferys and Lloyd, 2017). We are thus designing and building for (rapid) obsolescence.

In managerial terms, the power to control development processes and access to resources connected to this (be this knowledge, tools, equipment, networks and/or infrastructures) resides with a range of professionals in the public, private and third sectors, such as housing managers, estate agents, local government officers, property developers, building societies and insurance companies (Raco, 2013). Within this process are strategies of exclusion and closure. Avenues to think beyond or against the 'tried and tested' routes of housing provision are disregarded. 'Unqualified opinion' (i.e. the 'lay public') must be kept out of real decision making in the city. This is done through a number of methods and on a variety of scales, from policy designed to limit public participation in urban development processes (Raco et al., 2016) to the use of forms of jargon to control admissions to professions (Said, 1993).

Ivan Illich, the anarchist social commentator, believed that due to the growing professionalisation of the social realm, people had given over their vision of the future, or in this case of the city, to a 'professional elite' - to politicians and business 'leaders' - who promised to protect and shelter them in return for their labour:

[5] Under Section 106 developers are required to provide a certain proportion of affordable housing in developments of more than 10 homes, ranging from 35-50 per cent depending on the local authority. Developers who claim their schemes are not commercially viable when subject to these obligations (nearly all schemes) are required to submit a Financial Viability Assessment explaining why they cannot meet the obligations. These Assessments are not publically available, even members of the planning committee do not see them, instead they rely on a recommendation from the planning officer who, in turn, relies on an assessment by the District Valuer's Service.

> "At present people tend to relinquish the task of envisaging the future to a professional elite. They transfer power to politicians who promise to build up the machinery to deliver this future… Political institutions themselves become draft mechanisms to press people into complicity with output goals. What is right comes to be subordinated to what is good for institutions" (1973: 12).

And so what is now required in such extreme economic times is bare-faced apolitical pragmatism (which is increasingly channelled and organised through private actors) (Raco et al., 2016). I discuss the de-politicisation and de-democratisation of development in more detail in Chapter 6, yet this discussion is so important to tend to in this chapter too as it is *because* of this context that new housing realities need to be proposed but equally, it is exactly this context that makes them so difficult to bring into being.

4.2.2 The amateur urbanist

The results of top-down decision making in urban development are thus well chronicled (Healey, 1997; Jacobs, 1961 [1992]). Jane Jacobs, the amateur urbanist, was one celebrated critic of large scale urban renewal processes of the 1960s and 70s. As an 'amateur' Jacobs lacked qualifications in planning (for which she was derided). Her 'amateurism' is important here as it is a concept and a practice that is threaded throughout this thesis, and particularly in the latter parts of this chapter. Here amateurism denotes experimentation, learning and doing 'off the cuff', as my discussion of Peter's material experimentation in Chapter 3 emphasised. It is connected to a sense of autonomy, to a freedom to try new things, to learn as you go, to learn by doing, by trying, by making mistakes. The role of the amateur here is akin to an experimental scientist, putting parts together, seeing what works, what sticks, what doesn't, what falls

apart as I highlight in my account of the Protohome workshops below. As a result, like Jacobs, the amateur may lack formal education but is not wanting in intuitive skill.

In viewing the city through an amateur eye and from her own neighbourhood, Jacobs felt that in most top-down planning processes communities were "dealt with intellectually like grains of sand, or electrons or billiard balls" (1961 [1992]: 437) by 'professional' planners. She critiqued the simplified breaking down of complex social relations into statistics within processes of 'urban renewal' stating that, "in the pseudoscience of city rebuilding and planning, years of learning and a plethora of subtle and complicated dogma have arisen on a foundation of nonsense" (1961 [1992]: 13). Jacobs criticised the father of the modernist tower block, Le Corbusier, and his vision of streets in the sky in his *Plan Voisin* (1925) for Paris (see Figure 23). This is a vision of high rises sitting in linear repetition in the landscape, surrounded by greenery. Great arterial roads pass by the architecture, separating human life from traffic. Here the architect flexes his muscles on the cityscape in a true masculine vision of the city – the "visible ego" (1961 [1992]: 23) as Jacobs puts it. However, as I state below in relation to the building typologies used in Bathore, Le Corbusier's work was not all brutal rationalism, there was in fact a strong humane aspect to his work, as well as a (socialist) desire to replace slums with new, clean living conditions. The issue here is not so much his desire, but his *approach* – not only with regards to the building typologies that he employed (in the form of the high rise, which was then cheaply imitated by local authorities around the world), but also the paternalism that was inherent within these projects (these forms became the architecture of welfare Capitalism). This connects to the critique of the welfare state that I foregrounded in Chapter 3.

Jacobs inevitably reacted negatively to what she considered *whole* visions of the city, created (at one time) by the pencil of the city planner, as entire

swathes of the city were deleted and (re)planned. These representations of the city were largely top-down and cartographic, reducing it to a series of lines, dots and squares. This arguably 'flattens' space, neutralises and detaches it from street level life (Blomley, 1998). As Blomley states, "Cartographic space is emptied of the complexities and particularities that give it meaning on the ground and is presented as an isotropic surface… Emptied from the map, of course, are the complex historical layerings" (1998: 598-99). Lefebvre calls these representations "conceptualised space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers... all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (1991: 38). Such representations, he argues, are "tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose" (1991: 33). And with this order brings the purification and sterilisation of places - what Bonnett (2014) terms 'the urban blandscape'.

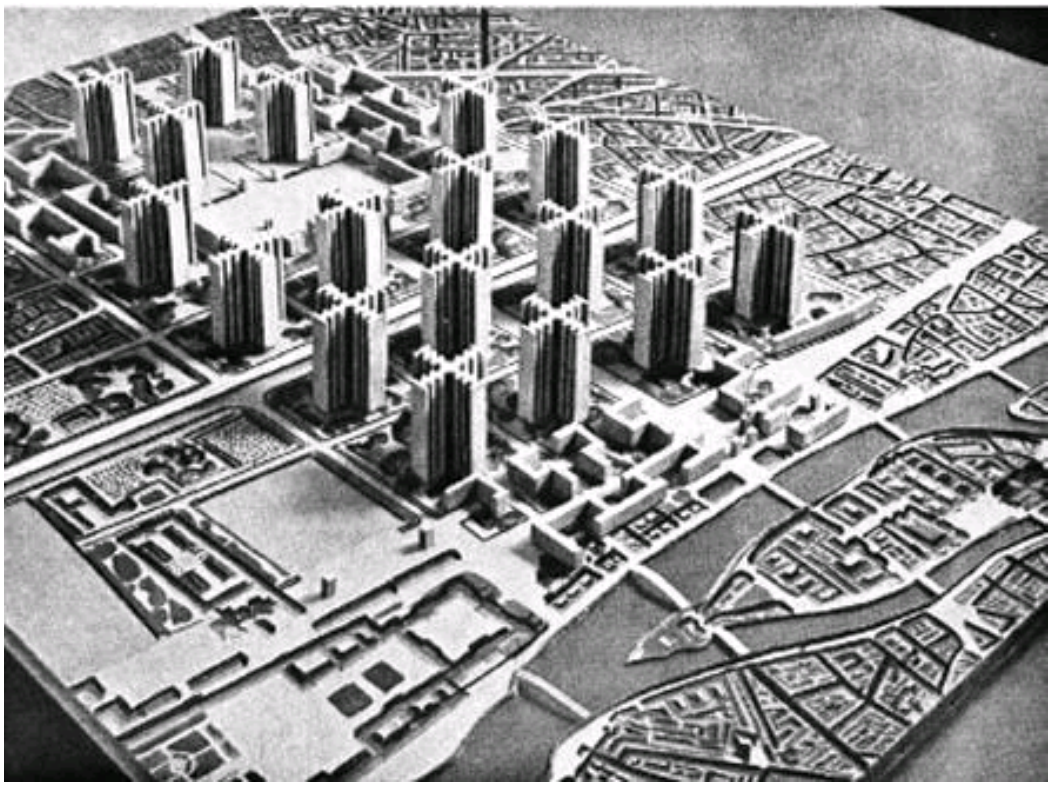

Figure 23: Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* for Paris, 1925. *(Source: Affordable Housing Institute)*

Jacobs also felt that planners ignore the informal ways that citizens govern the city. She understood the city as a living organism and so critiqued how planners 'placed' certain public functions into strict zones (for instance commercial, cultural and residential), separating activities so different uses and social relationships do not 'contaminate' each other. Instead Jacobs witnessed and wrote about the micro-practices and encounters of the street - loitering, gossiping, exchanging, watching, waiting. These are the activities that are central to her concept of the 'sidewalk ballet' - how many different uses of the city street come together, join and clash (she also used the concept of 'cross use' to explain this) (1961 [1992]: 130). She wrote that a diverse street should have different temporalities, it should be in use from day to night and have a dense concentration of people (1961 [1992]: 150-1). Jacobs believed if we do not have this, we have monotony:

> "In places stamped with the monotony and repetition of sameness you move, but in moving you seem to have gotten nowhere. North is the same as south, or east as west. Sometimes north, south, east and west are all alike, as they are when you stand within the grounds of a large project" (1961 [1992]: 223-4).

Instead of monotony there is something altogether more gritty, more lively about Jacobs' depiction of her New York neighbourhood and the social relationships that are formed, embedded and that clash on her street. And as we shall see through the empirical evidence below, new forms of urban vitality, creativity and learning can emerge through more open approaches to planning, that are able to reflect the ever changing nature of sociospatial relations.

4.2.3 The open city

Like Jacobs, Richard Sennett (2006) has criticised the over structured city, which he terms the 'brittle city' that over specifies city space and city life, through

closed, instead of open planning. In *The Uses of Disorder* (1970) Sennett states that within professional planning there is a real fear of the unknown, planners want to be able to control all the variables, they don't want to deal with the dissonance, conflict and the messiness of urban lives. This is what Sennett calls a "search for purity… an attempt to build an image or identity that coheres, is unified, and filters out threats in social experience" (1970: 19). This is a certain "explaining in advance of experience" which "assumes the lessons of experience without undergoing the actual experience itself" (1970: 27). And of course it is also an attempt to control use, patterns of mobility and social relationships, by projecting/predicting future needs onto spaces and citizens (1970: 79). The closed city is also connected to the hegemony of urban growth, as capital moves in a cyclic fashion around the city, from site to site, as Sennett states:

> "… big capitalism and powerful developers tend to favour closure and homogeneity, determinate, predictable, and balanced in form; the role of the radical planner therefore is to champion dissonance. In practical planning, if a city is opened up, it will allow jerry-built adaptations or additions to existing buildings; it will encourage uses of public spaces which don't fit neatly together" (2006: 7).

However whilst Sennett contrasts 'open' and 'closed' planning, he also understands that the city and the systems under which it is planned and developed are 'grey':

> "Closed means over-determined, balanced, integrated, linear. Open means incomplete, errant, conflictual, non-linear. The closed city is full of boundaries and walls; the open city possesses more borders and membranes. The closed city can be designed and operated top-down; it is a city which belongs to the masters. The

> open city is a bottomup place; it belongs to the people. These contrasts of course are not absolutes of black-and-white; real life is painted in greys" (2006: 14).

So the distinctions between 'open' and 'closed' planning are subtle and ever-changing. I realised this during the Protohome project, when I was working in tangent with individuals, agencies, charities, architects and the local authority. Working with such diverse actors and their various desires and requirements, I can appreciate that there are no absolutes, there is no purity in urban development processes (as I examine in more detail in Chapter 6). So whilst I draw from Sennett and Jacobs' approaches to open planning, I also recognise the limits to such fixed (and often negative) visions of urban planning and the professionals that undertake this. Like Sennett states above, planning is thus a practice that is painted in greys.

But whilst I recognise the limitations of Jacobs and Sennett's sentiments, I also recognise the usefulness of the vision that they offer in a time of scarcity. There is inevitably a need to relearn how cities are to develop and function in order to survive in a time of economic uncertainty (Sennett, 1970: 10; see also Durst, 2016; Durst and Ward, 2014; Ward, 2014 on 'Texas Colonias' and Loftus-Farren, 2011 on 'tent cities' in the US). The idea of 'jerry built adaptions', incremental builds and simple architectural forms that I witnessed both in Bathore and brought into being in the Protohome project are ways of 'making do' that are, at times, chaotic and uncontrolled but always creative. Certainly for Sennett (1970) there are uses to this disorder. Within the mass amateurism of the informal settlement there is a certain psychological freedom to be able to physically recreate and rebuild city space, stemming not only from the coping mechanisms discussed in the previous chapter, but also from the freedom to think more broadly and experimentally about *what is possible*. Partly, in the case of Bathore, this stems from people stretching the boundaries

of planning, whilst the government turns a blind eye, yet this kind of unruliness opens up new sociospatial imaginaries against the normative functional and pre-planned division of space as Sennett states:

> "Once preplanned city space is removed, the actual use of the space becomes much more important in the lives of its users. For when predetermined use through zoning is eliminated, the character of a neighbourhood will depend on the specific bonds and alliances of the people within it; its nature will be determined by social acts and the burden of those acts over time as a community's history. The preplanned 'image' of city neighbourhoods would not be definable on a planner's map it would depend on how the individuals of the neighbourhood dealt with each other. Encouraging unzoned urban places, no longer centrally controlled, would promote visual and functional disorder in the city. My belief is that this disorder is *better* than dead, predetermined planning, which restricts effective social exploration. It is better for men to be makers of historical change than for the functional design of a pre-experiential plan to be 'carried out'" (1970: 116).

So it's about giving people the freedom to create their own order/disorder, and make sense of their own environment, to appropriate the city in the ways they want to. But furthermore, as Sennett stresses, in the unzoned city it is the social relationships that become key, as I discuss in Chapter 5.

It is however unlikely that we will see the informality that I witnessed in Bathore in the UK in the future. A specific political and economic situation brought Bathore into existence. Yet the experience in Bathore offers a route into *thinking* about freer, more autonomous approaches to urban planning and

design and thereby challenging the regulatory mechanisms of the British development system. Furthermore, Bathore's development was not necessarily a result of the deregulation of space/planning (if we recall the 'invitation' from the ex Prime Minister to come and settle in Kamëz). Even in Bathore, as in Newcastle, spaces, whether 'open' or 'closed' are borne out of the sometimes more prohibitory and sometimes less prohibitory structures, actors and institutions, as Sennett stated above, "real life is painted in greys" (2006: 14). So practices of open planning are not without rationality, they are not emptied from these processes, they are often planned in detail, they are often strategic and designed, yet the point is, that within open forms of planning the terms and boundaries of the 'plan' are more open to be shifted once the process is in motion. However, this then prompts me to question how can this be done in practice when participatory housing practitioners are bound by the desires and needs of many stakeholders and regulatory mechanisms? Can regulatory frameworks be used and taken advantage of to create *more* open planning? I analyse these questions in Chapter 6.

4.3 Home as Embedded Process

The 'open city' offers a sense of the city as a bottom-up process of *becoming.* In this section I return to John Turner's (1977) notion of 'housing as a verb' and, instead of observing the urban realm as a whole, I specifically examine the home, as *process* rather than just *product*, highlighting how learning to build connects to embedded processes of dwelling. I also examine how the home might operate as a reflection of 'vernacular values', and put forward an argument for the informal as the newest manifestation of vernacular architecture, as dwellings that are embedded in historical and social structures, but which are also constantly in flux.

4.3.1 The emergent house

Conceptualising the house as process means examining its wider meaning and use - how it connects to social, economic and political opportunities for self and collective fulfilment and flourishing. It is these 'processes of formation' that are key to both the aesthetic form and to the social relationships formed through this process, as I examine in Chapter 5 (Ingold, 2000). As I highlight through the Bathore study below, the process of house-building lasts for many years, floors are added as and when needed, partitions are inserted, roofs replace terraces (see Figure 24). Even in 'professionally' built housing, the building process doesn't end when the house is seemingly complete, instead adaptions are made throughout the years, the shape and form of the interior and exterior space changes, rooms are used and appropriated in new ways, walls get knocked through, spaces opened up, extensions made, attics become bedrooms and living rooms open up onto gardens (Brand, 1994). Brand (1994) advocates for ad hoc, cheaply built buildings that are open to be reshaped and reformed, that are cheap to adjust and that can shape to the dwellers' evolving needs. His concept of the 'continual house' is one that expands and changes

over time, as residents make fractional changes to the building's fabric, testing new uses for space - rooms not being defined prior to them being created.

Figure 24: A second floor is added to a house in Bathore many years after the ground floor has been built.

In their work on housing and flexibility, Jeremy Till and Tatjana Schneider (2007) discuss 'hard' and 'soft' approaches to design. The notion of 'soft space' refers to spatial tactics which allow indeterminacy, and thus lends itself to a participatory approach to design, allowing a degree of tenant control at both design stages and over the life of the building. We can see this in the 'core house' in Bathore and the Segal system of posts and non-load bearing walls, as I discuss below, so that room formations can be changed easily and occupation of rooms is left open to interpretation by various user groups. In contrast, 'hard space' refers to more specifically determined space, how the architect *designs in* the utilisation of space, prefiguring it. We can see how this links back to my conceptualisation of scarcity in Chapter 3 – by not predicting in advance of living there is an opportunity to think of design in relationship to scarcity of

economy or resources, as I discuss below in relation to incremental building in Bathore.

Tim Ingold discusses how a process oriented approach opens up new material and formalistic possibilities. He writes that "processes of making appear swallowed up in the objects made" (2013: 7). Instead, surrendering to the material, seeing where it leads "leaves us with a picture of making altogether different from the 'construction kit' view… according to which the maker begins with a plan or template and a finite set of parts, and ends when the final piece is put in place" (2013: 45). In contrast Ingold proposes not a *building up*, but a *carrying on* - a process which does not have a defined path. Understanding "form as emergent rather than imposed" (2013: 44) not only offers a certain material and practical freedom but also freedom of economy, to build as when the household economy permits, as I highlight in the Bathore study below. Similarly, Sennett, in examining the history of the craftsman, writes:

> "In pre-industrial factory systems, the experience of making a product was more important than a standard image, a clear picture, of the 'whole' to be made, those craftsman conceived, therefore that to define in advance what a thing should look like would interfere with 'efficiency', that is, with the freedom of the craftsman to exploit his materials and forms during production. In an industrial situation, the product to be made is conceived beforehand, so that the realisation of the product, the achievement of the whole, is a passive routine, not an active experience or exploration. By envisaging the fruit of labour in advance of labour itself it is therefore possible to plan the production process so that the 'parts are determined by the whole', since the parts of production are thought to have no life of their own, no role other than to work harmoniously towards the creation of a preplanned entity. This

> mentality of production obviously suits, even invites, the use of machine tools instead of human labour" (1970: 79).

And so, as I highlight through the Newcastle study below, the *hand made* object or building, which makes use of simple tools and methods, can be more open and more reflexive to exploring design and spatiality through processes of making, as opposed to rigidly designed in advance. Furthermore, it can also respond more productively to the conditions of on-going scarcity.

Yet it would be naïve to think that the participatory housing projects at the centre of this research do not have, at least, a vague plan. As I stated above in relation to *more* open forms of planning being painted in "greys", there is a need to account for compromise and for the needs and desires of the many diverse stakeholders involved in participatory housing projects. It is thus not that these processes of open planning/building are without rationality, but that it is a different form of rationality, one that is more open to dead ends and re-routes, one that is inductive, rather than deductive, one that, whilst having a plan, is also open to changing the boundaries of the plan once it is in motion. In the Protohome project we had a basic design, completed by xsite architecture, which guided the form and size of the building (see Figure 25). Yet when undertaking our design, we realised that changes needed to be made, either because the materials were insufficient for the job (glass replaced polycarbonate sheet) or because the design needed to be simpler for untrained self-builders (basic butt joints replaced mortise and tenon joints). And so in the end we, as a group, with Dean Crawford, the lead joiner, guiding us, worked the design out as we went along, and much was worked out on site, in order to fit the specifics and limitations of the area - for instance the lay of the land (where slopes and surface changes were), visibility (sightlines) and size (of decking, for example). So here it is the *nature* of the design that is important. The design should be a signpost, something fluid, that gets drawn and

redrawn, that gets modified over the course of a building project. This is a practice of anticipation, not a fixed statement of intent, where designing and making happen together and are not disconnected processes (either in time or activity) (Ingold, 2013: 69). This kind of open-ended design can cope with uncertainty - "dealing with hopes and dreams rather than plans and predictions" (Ingold, 2013: 71), and furthermore, this inner uncertainty can drive and heighten the creative process. With fixed designs there is no room for error, no room for improvisation.

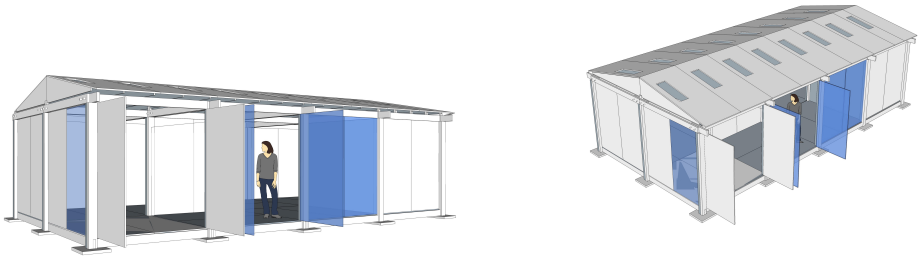

Figure 25: The design for Protohome, completed by xsite architecture.

So instead of the design being fixed, the 'working through', the reshaping of practices and designs throughout the Protohome build, helped participants to appreciate how buildings evolve, and allowed them to express new ideas for the project. Instead of simply undertaking a series of tasks in relation to a set of pre-written instructions, participants were able to influence the course of the project and have some collective autonomy over the outcome.

4.3.2 Learning-as-dwelling

Within this process oriented account of building home, examining how building practices and knowledges are learnt (either historically, being passed down through generations, as I state below with regards to Bathore, or, alternatively, through doing in the present, as in Newcastle) is vital.

Drawing on Heidegger (1993), Ingold (2000) counters what he calls the 'building perspective' with the 'dwelling perspective'. According to the 'building perspective' the building is a container for certain 'life activities', and it is only after the home is built, after we have acted upon the world, that dwelling can occur. Here, "productive work serves merely to transcribe pre-existent, ideal forms onto an initially formless material substrate" (Ingold, 2000: 10). This is thus just a process of translating virtual to actual, prioritising the product over the process. As Ingold writes, a more fundamental sense of dwelling means to build, to construct, to preserve and to care for, thus dwelling is caught up *within* building: "it is in the very process of dwelling that we build" (2000: 188). Through this act of building-as-dwelling, *learning-as-dwelling* can occur in a practical, not cognitive way, through concrete engagements into the fabric of the everyday city (McFarlane, 2011a: 15). So learning emerges and is lived through practice, as Plumb states: "learning is best conceived as a process through which learners forever weave themselves into the fabric of their natural, social and cultural worlds" (2008: 62). This also means that *building/learning-as-dwelling* involves how people draw on past experiences, memories and histories in order to live, such as the connection between building practices and histories in Bathore, as I highlight below, as much as on the street, as in the story of Peter's 'tinkering' with materials from Chapter 3. And so both family and cultural genealogies are important because, as Ingold states, "Human children… grow up in environments furnished by the work of previous generations, and as they do so they come literally to carry the forms of their dwelling in their bodies – in specific skills, sensibilities and dispositions" (2000: 186).

Furthermore, in this account, thinking and doing are not separate, thinking occurs through practice, trying and building, as one builder in Bathore stated, "Most people know how to build with their minds - nobody takes engineers". Most self-builders in Bathore lack formal technical knowledge, yet this is learnt

through processes of doing that are rooted in material reality as this quote from one interviewee highlights (which is included in the thesis title):

> "I was a teacher in Kukës [a northern region of Albania]. In my bag where I used to put my books, I now put the materials to build… I learned how to build a wall but I needed to know how to put the plaster on the wall, so I said to the engineer, 'I don't know how to put the plaster on the walls' and he said, 'When you taught pupils in your school, how did you teach them how to write?' I said, 'I just took their hands and taught them how to write'. He said, 'Ok then, give me your hand and I'll teach you how to build'".

And as I examine below, many members of the Protohome group learnt more effectively through hand-on approaches. And so these processes of *building/ learning-as-dwelling*, as described above, signify not just that the urban is a process in which the 'finished object' is fleeting (Ingold 2013; 2008; 2000), but also that the subject of the dwelling goes through a process of transformation. The subject learns, builds social networks and forms identity. This connects with the wider imperative stemming from this research – that of personal and group transformation through the act of building, as I examine in Chapter 5.

Perhaps it is, as Sennett suggests, that we have an inability to put practice into words: "language is not an adequate 'mirror-tool' for the physical movements of the human body" (2008: 95). There is thus a gap between language and bodily activity. Indeed most learning is tacit and non-linguistic, it is generated in practice, whilst western models of learning assume that knowledge is generated through language (Mohan, 1999: 45). Instead, the notion *of learning-as-dwelling* is a relational process that is "stretched over, not divided among – mind, body, activity" (Lave, 1988: 1). Furthermore, Plumb writes that "thinking of learning as dwelling not only provides a basis for escaping the strictures of

dominant cognitivist and individualistic notions of learning" (2008: 62, see also Lave and Wenger, 1991) but also for escaping the dominant acquisition theory of learning – the theory that knowledge is simply 'imparted' from one being to another through language. And, so as Ingold (2008) suggests, we do not need to look to alternative *methodologies*, but alternative *pedagogies* of *learning-as-dwelling*.

A 'dwelling perspective' thus has implications for how the house is conceptualised. Instead of being a mere instance of static and stagnant architecture, the house becomes an organism (Blier, 1987: 2), one that, as I stated above, is in a constant process of becoming. The fleeting form of the house is thus not just a 'container' for certain activities but is part of an extended dwelling process (Ingold, 2000: 185).

4.3.3 Vernacular values

The building typologies used in both studies – whether this was the 'core house' in Bathore or the Segal system in Newcastle, as I examine below, are not only process-led, learnt through dwelling, they are also rooted in the everyday, in a certain sense of the 'vernacular'. The term 'vernacular' throws up images of objects embedded in the local, engrained in traditions of place. Vernacular architecture reflects local customs, social structure, climate and economics, guided by conventions built up over time in a locality (Brand, 1994; Brunskill, 1976; Crysler, 2000; Kellett and Napier, 1995; Lawrence, 1987; Oliver, 1969; Rudofsky, 1964; Upton, 1993). Because vernacular buildings are often designed and built by amateurs, by the users, the signature of the maker is in the details, the core and the craft of building. It might be rough sawn or irregular but there is a supposed honesty of material in vernacular traditions – the building actively highlighting its materiality (Brand, 1994: 137). The vernacular is also human sized. This may be through the use of hand-sized

bricks, or the use of sections that can be lifted by one person, as in the Segal system of building that we used in Newcastle (which is erected akin to a traditional barn raising), to offer personal proximity and the freedom to truly do it yourself. It may also democratise the building process by not requiring expensive tools or equipment, as I discuss below in relation to 'convivial tools' (Illich, 1973).

But, importantly and regrettably, the vernacular is often conceptualised as being *stuck in time*, frozen in a particular, often 'developing world', context. It has become a museum object, a world heritage site, signposted and protected, fenced in and locked up. These visions of the vernacular have often reinforced 'insider-outsider' binaries where it is seen as the space of the 'Other', the 'not-modern' – embedded in 'primitive' societies which are separated both geographically and temporally from the industrialised processes of building and living (Crysler, 2000; Upton, 1993). Clifford (1986) has called this a narrative of "ethnographic pastoral" – places appear untouched, static in time, fragments of a remote past. Furthermore, when the vernacular is considered within contemporary western architectural practice, often it emerges as chintzy, crude re-interpretations, ersatz imitations, fairground architecture. Upton writes that this opposition has always been between *active* and *passive* building traditions stating, "If it is stable by definition, it is also, by definition, marginalized in a changing world. Its stability and passivity imply a stagnation and even deprivation against mainstream cultural change" (1993: 12).

I do not wish to play up to this binary by heightening difference. Instead I want to open up a conceptualisation of the vernacular that understands it not just as being socially, culturally and empirically embedded in a particular place and people (of those who designed and built it), but one that is also in flux, evolving with the changing world. No place is a static container, all are sites of change, and so concepts of 'tradition' or the vernacular are also not static or pre-

established. If we conceptualise it in these terms the 'vernacular' cannot be separated from the 'modern'. Therefore this conceptualisation is not only connected to a central aim of this research, which, in focusing on decentring knowledge production, brings together post-colonialism and PAR, it is also embedded in a wider concern about socially embedded forms of housing.

Conceptualising the vernacular as 'in flux' means that the boundaries of it are open to change. Utilising this conceptual framework, and recognising that notions of the vernacular do not normally stretch to the informal modes of house-building that I witnessed in Bathore, I believe that the informal should be seen as a form of vernacular architecture, instead of mere 'building' (Kellett and Napier, 1995). The informal is always changing, using whatever materials are locally available at a particular time, whether this be the detritus of modern industries such as plastic sheeting, tyres, pallets, corrugated metal, or cheaply bought, mass produced materials such as breezeblocks, timber sheets and concrete. Importantly, the materials used are grounded in what is available locally, and the form of housing created is always a response to the ever-changing household economy, as I state below, as well as social structure, as I examine in Chapter 5. Unfortunately the concept of the vernacular and of the craftsperson who brings this into being have become synonymous with Luddism, with an aversion to technology (Sennett, 2008) and the vernacular is often overlooked in favour of 'expert' solutions to housing problems. Whilst the vernacular is usually seen as static, of the past and of the outmoded, Kellett and Napier (1995) write that squatter settlements should be seen as part of a wider spectrum of 'nonprofessional environments', one in which intuitive creativity and enduring forms of tacit knowledge arise as a response to housing scarcity. They state that there has been "a denial of the valid architectural expression" (1995: 22) of informal settlements - the informal is seen as 'building' as opposed to 'architecture'. In Bathore the vernacular can be seen both in how dwellers creatively adapt and build but also how methods of house-building are

learnt from rural and communist traditions, as I discuss through the empirical material below. Discussing the aesthetic style of Bathore's self-built houses, one of the co-founders of Co-PLAN, Dritan Shutina said,

> "You hear architects and they say 'Ah, it's this and that', which is true in terms of architecture - no style, no consistency and so on, but I'm more pragmatic… so I can live with that. It's like… a painting - somebody likes, somebody doesn't like, and we can discuss about it but we are not hurt by how it looks. What we are hurt by is the costs of production, the costs of maintenance, the opportunity costs of doing this vis-à-vis another thing".

So in Bathore the houses often have an individual character, "Against the claim of perfection" (Sennett, 2008: 105) or any claims to follow normative building standards or aesthetics (see Figure 26).

Figure 26: Just one of Bathore's castles.

The vernacular also offers a lens through which to examine the ontological foundations of home and identity, as opposed to housing as commodity. In *Vernacular Values* Illich wanted to open up the concept of the vernacular to anything that was "homebred, homemade, derived from the commons, and that a person could protect and defend though he neither bought nor sold it on the market" (1980: no pagination). There is something open and democratising about his suggestion that the term needs to be restored and expanded in order to oppose the commodification of values, and of basic items such as housing.

As I stated above, top-down decision making in housing and urban development can be unreceptive to difference and to blind spots. That's why Jane Jacobs looked out of her bedroom window onto the street and watched how her neighbours and her children used, played and appropriated the urban environment. Her account is a narrative, a story of place as lived. Whilst she worked inductively, from the particulars to the general, she writes that planners work deductively (1961 [1992]: 441). And so what Jacobs was also calling for was a more rooted urban topography. The next two sections aim to do this by bringing a close analysis of amateur building processes in Bathore and Newcastle to the fore, examining how building practices are learnt through the passing of time and/or through doing. I link this discussion back to my aforementioned conceptualisation of scarcity, but in this instance I examine scarcity in relationship to incremental, flexible housing models/systems that connect to the precarious household economy and to the relearning of skills and ways of building that make use of simple and affordable 'convivial tools'/materials.

4.4 Tacit Knowledge in Building Bathore

4.4.1 Embedded knowledges

As I stated above, in relation to the *building/learning-as-dwelling* perspective, learning to build emerges from within particular contexts and histories. The construction of housing in Bathore was deeply connected to previous family, kin and villager relationships, as well as norms of building. Migrants coming from the north of the country had extensive building skills and some builders had gained construction experience during Communism, either through volunteer building programmes or through self-construction in their villages (Pojani, 2013: 810), as one man mentioned to me: "I knew how to build since communist times, we all knew how to build". This is thus spatially-distanciated learning. As I stated above, learning and practices move and translate in line with the 'dwelling perspective' and the concept of the vernacular as 'in flux'.

Collective construction of housing was prominent in 1970s communist Albania (Aliaj, 2003). Sweat labour was used as a method of mass mobilisation - the result of the "dogma of relying solely on Albania's own ability" (Aliaj, 2003: 34) and each Sunday, 'Enver's Day' (named after the dictator) people would do voluntary work, many building apartments. This allowed building costs to be kept down but it also operated as a form of state propaganda and as emergency mobilisation, in the case of earthquakes, for example. As an individual, the more hours you put into a volunteer build the higher you would get up on the housing list (yet in reality party members always jumped the queue).

Although self-construction of housing was common in rural Albania at this time (40 per cent of rural dwellings were owner occupied (Aliaj, 2003)), there were requirements of size and form, with two 'state sanctioned' building types: the *Elbasan* model: square, single-storey dwellings with three rooms and a veranda

(see Figure 27) and the *Shkodër* model: L shaped, two-storey houses for two families with three rooms and separate stairway access (Aliaj, 2003: 34). These two models of housing persist (named after two cities in Albania) - they are the most common forms used by residents in Bathore, being very simple and quick to construct, as Besnik Aliaj, co-founder of Co-PLAN, stated in an interview, "It's not the best model, but something pragmatic, a 80-100 square metre home".

Figure 27: *Elbasan*-style houses in Bathore.

Self-built homes during Communism had restrictions concerning appropriate materials (usually local stones), design and size of plot (100 square metres in urban areas, 200 square metres in rural areas and 300 square metres in mountainous areas) (Aliaj, 2003: 35), as one resident of Bathore stated:

> "During Communism there were only two styles of housing. We were not allowed to build in different styles. My Grandfather built a big, beautiful house, but the government destroyed it and built an *Elbasan* style house in its place…. Once I built my home, I put some

> special designs onto the façade and the government called me and said, 'Be careful!' because they wanted all the houses to look the same and they shouldn't be too big".

And so building knowledge was passed on through generations - "they were improvising from tradition" as Aliaj told me. But this knowledge altered post-Communism, with breezeblocks replacing stones or bricks, because as one interviewee said, "It's easier and faster to build with breezeblocks", with one breezeblock being equivalent to six small bricks (Aliaj, 2014). This translation of technique, from north to south which brought with it material changes is interesting, not only because it shows spatial displacement but also ideological displacement, with the acquisition of new types of brick and block signifying the 'opening up' of Albania to foreign materials and resources, as these quotes testify:

> "Most people knew how to build because in most of the areas like Kukës or Dibër [northern regions where many migrants came from] we built with stone, not breezeblocks and we made the roofs with wood, so we didn't know about breezeblocks and plaster. So we came here and learnt how to do it differently."

> "The homes were built differently [than in the villages] because building a home with stones was very difficult, it would take more than six months."

So there was a certain translation of knowledge from Communism, yet one that transformed through travel to fit new needs and aspirations. Again, as I stated above, this is the vernacular as something not static, but in flux, changing according to space-time specifics.

4.4.2 Incremental building

Migrants coming to Bathore adopted a specific process of settling and building. Some, although not all, of the first settlers also became the 'middlemen' who subdivided land and 'sold' it informally to other migrants, mostly in the form of verbal agreements (Acioly et al., 2003: 7). This did not of course signify land ownership but rather a right to settle on the land. Yet this 'subdivision' of land could not quite be conceived of as 'entrepreneurial' (de Soto, 2000). Most of the original migrants gave land to family, friends or neighbours coming from their villages in the north, so were not looking to gain financially from state land. One of the first migrants to come said,

> "When Mahmut [a village elder] came he said to me, 'I have land for you here'... I just said to my cousins, 'Ok, come, I have land for you here' and then they said to their cousins, 'Come, I have land for you here'. So we didn't sell the land to each other we just gave it to each other".

So the decision to migrate was based on the experience of others that went before, and furthermore, was assisted by them. As I highlight in Chapter 5, migration strategies were heavily informed by existing social relations, and information sharing both prior to, and after, migration was an important aspect of this. This might involve advice on acquiring water, building materials, electricity, work, or about building strategies. These arrangements created an immediate 'community' in Bathore - networks of villagers, families and friends settled together – almost transplanting whole villages from the mountains of the north to the outskirts of Tiranë.

Migrants initially identified land in a very discreet manner. Usually they would observe land and property titles to see whether land could be appropriated or

not (this would usually done by one of the younger sons whereas the older sons would secure finance by emigrating abroad) (Acioly et al., 2003: 7). Then the actual building process would begin. When migrants first arrived they 'marked' the land by putting a heap of stones around it and then built a *barakë* (hut) made from wood and clay. Then, when their confidence grew, they started to build more permanent houses, step by step, incrementally; a process of 'testing' the authorities (see Figure 28). On self-builder stated in an interview, "Today one thing, tomorrow another thing to build it slowly, slowly", whilst another told me that, "We built our homes and then destroyed them and built other homes. I built the new home over the old home. We only lived in one room, and then step-by-step we built it" (see Figure 29). This incrementality highlights a process of *building/learning-as-dwelling* occurring.

Eventually they would build decent quality, permanent buildings using bought materials. In doing so they believed that these would be more difficult to remove or destroy by the authorities (Pojani, 2009: 86). Interviewees spoke about testing, waiting and seeing the "reaction" of the authorities. They might stay for one or two years in the *barakë*, and then once secure on the land they would invite other family members and villagers to join them, subdividing the land in the process (Acioly et al., 2003: 7).

This created a rapid 'critical mass' of people. According to local residents, in the mid 1990s, there were three to four families arriving each night:

> "When I came here there was just fields… But so many friends started to come. People always came during the night because in the daytime they weren't allowed to because of the police… Every day when we woke up in the morning we saw new families all around."

> "Everyday when I woke up in the morning I saw three new families that had come to Bathore in the night. They just built a place to stay, not a house but a hut with wood. They built these very quickly. They came during the night and in the morning they had a very simple structure which was easy to make."

Figure 28: The process of house-building in Bathore. *(Source: Co-PLAN)*

This tentative act of building was quiet, always a process of testing not just the authorities, but also the owners of the land. Some land had pre-communist owners or was given to the farmers working on the land at the fall of Communism. One farmer who owned land in Bathore, stated that although they put fencing around the land to protect it from squatters, "after one year we didn't go there… [and] there was someone building a house there so… we had to sell it to that person because we couldn't kick them off". As I stated in Chapter 2, the ambivalences surrounding land distribution post-Communism has caused much tension between incoming migrants and existing residents either working on the land or making historical family claims to it, meaning that disputes over land are a frequent occurrence.

This incremental process of settling, is a quiet, yet political act, akin to what Asef Bayat calls 'the quiet encroachment of the ordinary' which is "marked by a quiet, largely atomised, and prolonged mobilisation with episodic collective action" (2004: 90). Whilst this might begin as a quiet encroachment of gradually building, when faced with opposition from the government these groups might become loud, collective and politicised (2004: 92). Bayat writes that "people set about such ventures individually, often organised only around kinship and friendship ties, and without much clamour" (2004: 92) until they are fully settled, occupying enough land for them to stake a claim in the face of the bulldozers. As I stated in Chapter 3 in relation to how *induced agency* might transform into *catalytic agency,* this is what occurred in Bathore in 1995, when residents protested and defeated the government in the face of the bulldozer.

In Bathore as the household economy improves and remittances arrive, better materials are used and roofs replace terraces (Accioly et al., 2004). Building incrementally does not only signify the precarity of household economies and the role that remittances play in the construction process of informal settlements, it also signifies an idea about the future, about plans and aspirations, what Besnik Aliaj called, a "second agenda". The use of a basic concrete structure or 'core house' which is then 'in-filled' over time shows creativity, allowing for flexibility as families and household economies grow. Houses are constantly in an unfinished state, with steel rods protruding from the tops of buildings just waiting for the next floor to go up if needed. This is an alternative to the 'one-size-fits-all' approach and not only addresses the economic challenges of creating homes for low-income groups, but also supports the process of community consolidation and the subsequent social gains that may arise from this. And so through incremental forms of building

individuals and families can respond to economic scarcity and housing precarity.

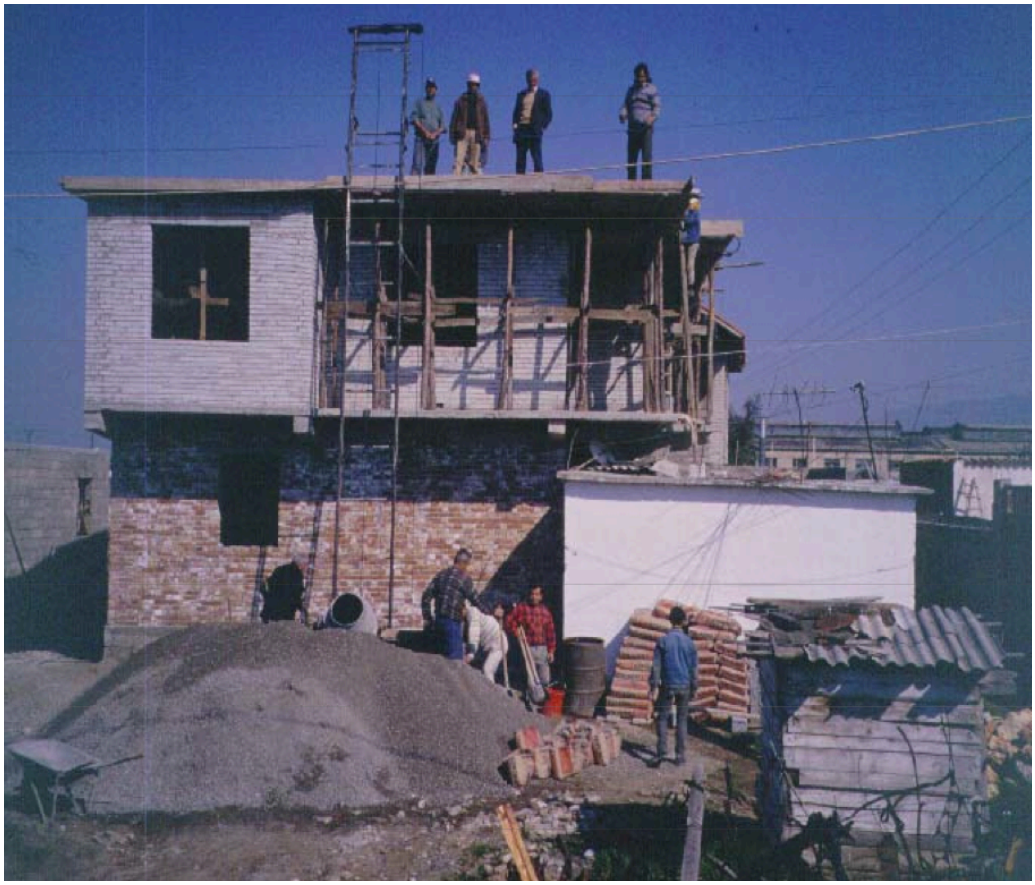

Figure 29: The house-building process in the mid 1990s in Bathore. *(Source: Co-PLAN)*

The method of building used in Bathore is largely a variation of the 'core house'. Core housing was introduced by the United Nations (UN) through the 'sites and services' approach that I discussed in Chapter 3. It was chosen because it could be prefabricated, mass produced and once erected could be moved into straight away, leaving the residents to 'infill' it over time. The provision of basic utilities would complete the plan. Yet, as Abrams (1964) argues, one aspect that the UN did not take into account was the need for different typologies of core house depending on culture, geography and climate (the importance of which I highlighted above in relation to vernacular architecture). In Bathore the core house has connections both to the country's

past (the *Elbasan* and *Shkodër* building typologies) and also to wider international trends of incremental, self-built housing (see Figure 26). In material terms, this involves basic concrete structural columns and slabs to make up the 'core house' which is then 'in-filled' incrementally over time (see Figure 28). This shows creativity and lends itself to adjustment and improvement as families grow or as household economies increase.

The 'core house' is akin to Le Corbusier's *Maison Dom-ino* which was based on a self-build housing model that he saw in Turkey, and has become famous throughout the world (see Figure 30). This model proposed an open floor plan consisting of concrete slabs supported by a minimal number of thin, reinforced concrete columns around the edges, with a stairway providing access to each level on one side of the floor plan. The model eliminated load-bearing walls and the supporting beams for the ceiling and the frame were completely independent of floor plans thus giving freedom to the user to design the interior configuration. *Dom-ino* is therefore a support structure, the beginning of a process to be completed by the residents themselves. It is, as McGuirk writes, "the abandonment of total design. The architect is no longer a visionary, just a facilitator" (2014: no pagination).

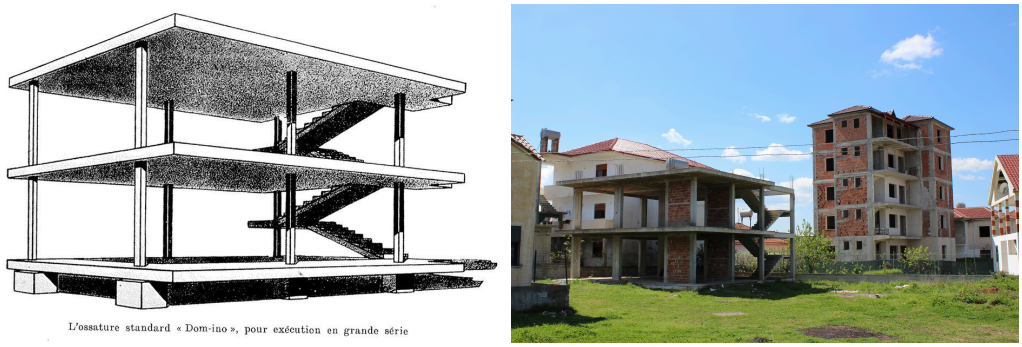

Figure 30: Le Corbusier, *Dom-ino*, 1914 *(Source: Domus)* and *Dom-ino* in Bathore.

Clearly improvisation in building and everyday living has been crucial in Bathore. Initially conditions were very difficult, with no water, sewerage systems or roads, and electricity taken from the remains of the dairy industry, as one

resident stated, "I opened a well in my garden and got water from there by myself. When life is difficult you have to learn". And so residents were forced to improvise out of scarcity and necessity - actions of 'making do' which I discussed in Chapter 3. They used creative ways to reduce the costs of building, ranging from employing cheap materials to decreasing labour costs by involving relatives and neighbours in the building process. During the 1990s a simple one storey house could be constructed for between $5000-$10,000 or $40-$50 per square metre (usually homes are between 200-500 metres squared), at a time when "the government… was building for $200 and the private sector for $400/500 (per square metre) - ten times more" (Interview with Besnik Aliaj). This highlights the capital savings that can be made through participatory approaches as opposed to buying homes in the formal marketplace.

The process of settling and building in Bathore offered some key points of learning for the Protohome project, as I go on to describe in the next section. A process based, incremental approach to building could aid in creating more opportunities for participatory forms of housing for low income communities in the UK. This foregrounds learning by doing and through material processes as I highlight in more detail in the next section.

4.5 "I'd like to be able to point to it and say, 'I made that!'"[6]: Constructing Protohome

Figure 31: Constructing Protohome on site. *(Sources: John Hipkin and Hev Johnson)*

4.5.1 The Segal system

In Newcastle we used a variation of the 'core house', called the 'Segal system', named after the architect Walter Segal, who developed a system of self-build which is specifically designed for untrained builders. Whilst rebuilding his family home Segal built a temporary structure in his garden using standard cladding materials, with no foundations other than paving slabs. It took two weeks to build and cost £800. He felt that this building was more interesting than the family home he eventually went on to build, and developed the system in the 1970s through a series of council-led self-build schemes in Lewisham (Ospina, 1987) (see Figure 32).

[6] Interview with Protohome group member.

Figure 32: Walter's Way, Lewisham. One of the council-led self-build schemes using the Segal method, constructed in the 1970s.

Flexibility of use and ease of construction are at the heart of the Segal system, which is reflected in the design of Protohome, developed by xsite architecture. The frame of the structure is on a dimensional grid (see Figure 34), making plans easy to follow, and all construction is done using dry jointing techniques with bolts and screws, so there are no wet trades involved that might require more enhanced training. There is thus a sense of craft to this method, one that is rooted in the coming together of the hand, the body and the mind, a certain *building/learning-as-dwelling* process that I described above. The use of a core structure means that the walls and partitions are not load bearing, so the 'in fill' can be done incrementally over time. In the Segal method this infill is completed using modular panel walls held in place by wooden batons that can easily be unscrewed and moved around to change room formations or even to make spatial additions. Here the creation of the house is part of an expanded dwelling process because there are potentials for Segal houses to change and grow as needs change, as families or household economies improve, as with the core house model. But, practically, this also means that 'in wall' services

such as electrics and plumbing can be easily accessed and repairs and alterations simply made. Like Segal we made use of standard 'off the shelf' material sizes, each eight foot in length, so there was less cutting and waste, making the process more economical and saving the time and energy of the self-builder (see Figure 33).

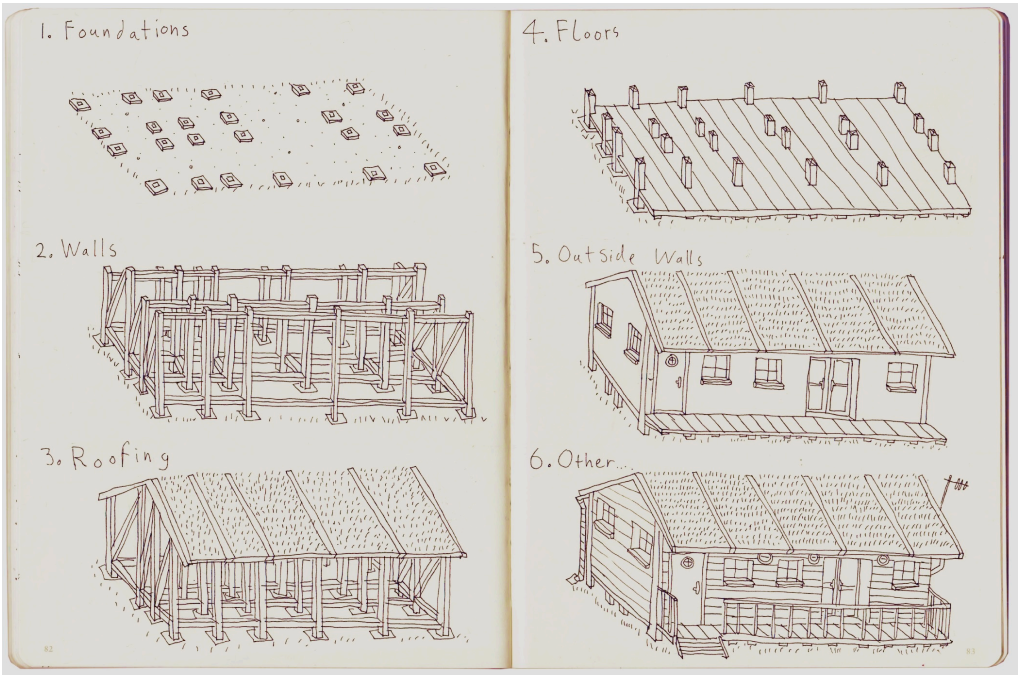

Figure 33: The Segal method.

Figure 34: Protohome's dimensional frame. *(Source: John Hipkin)*

So the key to this design is that it is very simple to construct and makes use of a limited number of components which allows a greater variety of building type through the modular arrangement (Umenyilora, 2000). This is a working example of Simon Nicholson's *Theory of Loose Parts* (1972). Nicholson believed that it is the 'loose parts' in our environment that empower our creativity. For Nicholson loose parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, fixed together, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. Loose parts have no specific use or direction for use, they can be used alone or combined with other materials. It can thus be an incremental approach to building. As Turner writes, this theory,

> "… reminds us that the freedom to do things for ourselves and in our own ways depends on the availability of the limited number of components that can be assembled in a maximum number of different ways… In most cases we need only a very few with which to do an immense range of variations" (1977: 106).

As a result this system really makes self-building achievable (we erected Protohome in two weeks), even for those without any previous woodwork skills - learning and training being at the core of the Protohome project. It also offers an approach through which learning can occur whilst building and so the *building/learning-as-dwelling* process can be activated.

4.5.2 The tortoise or the hare?: on technique

> *Nyree: "It'll be like the tortoise and the hare."*

> *Daz: "Who won? Isn't that a trick question? When I read the book it was the hare, in fact, nah, the tortoise… Do you know how long ago*

it was since I read the book? I think the hare and the tortoise is dead now it was that long ago!"

Figure 35: Making joints in the Crisis wood workshop; Making window frames; Personalised furniture made by group members; Learning the design programme Sketch Up. *(Source: Hev Johnson)*

The Protohome workshops took place two half days a week for 11 weeks with two joiners from TILT Workshop, a sessional tutor from Crisis who was responsible for the documentation of the project, Crisis' woodwork tutor and me, as project facilitator. In the workshops group members learnt basic woodwork skills (working with hand tools and jointing techniques) as well as being introduced to the basic design software Sketch Up. When learning techniques they undertook small projects, such as designing and making the furniture for Protohome - working towards small goals helped to energise the group to develop their skills. Many of the members learned more effectively through practice, through tacit, hands-on methods instead of through linguistic methods. In the following sections I analyse the build process more closely in relation to tacit forms of learning, processes of *building/learning-as-dwelling*

and how members developed technical understanding through this (see Figure 35).

In the workshop sessions the tutors attempted to get group members to *think* and *do* at the same time - using both the expressive qualities of the body *and* the imaginative qualities of the mind (Ingold, 2000; Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000). In this sense we wanted to create a process in which the practical and the intellectual were mutually embedded, part of a whole organic being - skills being not just cultural but also biological (Ingold, 2000). As I stated above, our ways of knowing about the world are largely through bodily practice - all skills start as bodily actions (Ingold, 2000; Sennett, 2008).

One of the first challenges for group members in their development of woodwork technique was getting them to *perceive* their actions, so that these could be built upon and/or modified. This was an important aspect of self-realisation and self-reflection. At the beginning some members worked in a 'gung-ho' fashion, quickly trying to get one joint finished in order to move onto the next, using blind, brute force. And so the idea of craftsmanship often got lost along the way. One member, Daz, initially worked fast, splitting pieces of wood, sawing wonky cuts and making tenons that were loose in their mortises. Recognising this, he said, "It looks like I've done it with a chainsaw!" Therefore Daz's first objective was to learn his own strength, to concentrate, to combine body and mind in order to better understand how the hand should work in relationship to the material, so that it doesn't overpower the material, as this conversation testifies:

> Daz: "… it's all about the concentration. But I find that hard to maintain [laughs]. Before I know anything I get too carried away with myself."

Julia: "Why do you get carried away?"

Daz: "I don't know. I might be trying to get it done quicker, I don't know why… I might think I'll get more done."

…

Julia: "… it's not a race, nothing's a race."

Nyree: "See? [slowly sawing through a bit of wood] I'm not fast, I'm like a snail."

Daz: "I am! That's where I'm going wrong!"

…

Hev: "I think the thing is, if you go faster you're less likely to get it right."

Daz: "Slow and steady isn't it?"

Nyree: "Yeah."

…

Daz: "Well I start off steady and before I know it I'm getting carried away."

…

> Nyree: "But it's good because you're getting stuck in and you make mistakes and then you learn."
>
> …
>
> Daz: [Sawing] "I think I'm gonna fall asleep before I get through this!"
>
> Julia: "Just remember the [tortoise and the hare] story!"
>
> Daz: "I'm gonna cut the tortoise's head off!"
>
> [Laughing]

Another of our members, Nyree, was the opposite to Daz. She said, "Can I just learn how to use a saw? Can I just spend all afternoon doing a saw?" She felt that she needed to learn how to use the tools properly before making joints. When she went on to making joints she was slow and steady stating, "there's time for speed later". Ingold (2013; 2000) writes that in handwork the thinking does not precede the acting but they happen at once and together. However, in our project I found that there had to be some time spent thinking about the process before the action began, but then the reflection and the thinking didn't stop once the body started acting/producing. Dean, the lead joiner, recognised that composure and the process of thinking had to begin before the act. Each week he reminded the group to,

> "Measure twice, cut once… You're covering yourself from making a mistake… It takes longer but if you were going to cut it twice as fast

> then you're going to have to cut it twice as many times 'cause it's not going to be right. So it doesn't matter how long you take at all".

Working slowly, and being gentle with the tools was important as a more conscientious approach to making, respecting the fusion of tool, material and hand:

> [Dean showing Nyree how to cut with a mitre saw]
>
> Dean: "Just do it really gently, I'm hardly putting any weight on."
>
> Nyree: "Yeah, let the saw do the work kind of thing?"
>
> Dom: "Yeah if you get it into your head that you cannot rush it, you'll spoil it if you do, that it's a slow job, don't worry about it."

This care for tool and material was important – not only because we only had a limited amount of material to work with, and money was tight, but also to embed an idea *of slow work* into the members, to ensure that they were learning and thinking about their actions every time they put hand to material. Conscientious working practices were also important because we had to create a building that was strong, that could withstand wind, rain and heavy use.

4.5.3 Difference, repetition, rhythm and daring to fail

Many of the woodwork tasks we undertook in the workshop seemed like repetition - making the same joints over and over again, the saw moving back and forth in the same rhythm, the same knocks on the chisel handle with the mallet, the same movement of hand right to left with the sandpaper. Repeating in order to improve, striving for perfection, but knowing that with the hand this

will rarely be achieved. But there is difference in repetition (Deleuze, 1968 [1994]). Although actions seem to repeat, seem to come full circle, each action is subtly different from the one that went before it, each action has a slightly different outcome, makes a slightly different mark, the transformative potential of the tool used against the material changes with every stroke or hit, as Daz stated, "Up and down. Every time I do one it's always different. It's like this one I think I've gone a bit too far in… Otherwise it would have been the one!" One slight second of lost concentration and the saw might move in an instant off the pencil line and the joint had to be started again. And so what seems like repetition of action never actually is. Each careful action is learning, where "practicing becomes a narrative rather than mere digital repetition; hard-won movements become ever more deeply ingrained in the body; the player inches forward to greater skill" (Sennett, 2008: 160). But routine can also be boring, as Nyree said, "I want to learn how to do everything not just be part of an assembly line of one thing like the woman that puts the stamp on the biscuit", but it can also be stimulating when observing with both hindsight and foresight – looking back at the skills already learnt and anticipating the skills that will be learnt (Sennett, 2008: 175). In addition, "habits establish a rhythm between problem solving and problem finding" (Sennett, 2008: 9) – and so habit and repetition might be the most basic form of learning (Brand, 1994).

Repetition can also lead to expression. Repeating a task can lead to an active exploration of difference and similarity where there is a certain willingness to experiment and improvise through error and to dwell in error, where hesitations, mistakes and uncertainties are visible instead of concealed. This is a process of becoming which "necessarily entails deformation, reformation, performation, and transformation, which involves gaps and gasps, stutters and cuts, misfires and stoppages, unintended outcomes, unprecedented transferences, and jagged changes" (Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000: 418). Thus learning through making mistakes was not viewed negatively in the workshops.

But just as failure can be productive, it can also be a destructive tool, and this needed to be recognised when working with potentially vulnerable individuals, because, as Sennett states, failure might "activate our sense of inadequacy… Agency is all to the good, but actively pursuing good work and finding you can't do it corrodes one's sense of self" (2008: 97). So failure might be an intensely personal experience, and connected to how an individual more broadly views themself in relation to others.

Dean also attempted to expand the analytical skills of group members by allowing them to assess and change the course of the process, and to problem solve. As I stated in Chapter 2 this is a core principle of PAR. So instead of leading members directly, he led them indirectly, and was always open to how the process could be amended and improved by members. He also taught through trial and error – getting members to learn by doing and by making mistakes. The success of this teaching methodology was realised when members started teaching other – highlighting that through the methodology there were opportunities for deep learning and capacity building. Furthermore, as tutors, we wanted to remove the workshops from an atmosphere of 'schooling', as Nyree stated:

> "'You're doing it wrong', it's that whole expression. Nobody in the whole time in the Crisis woodshop or in Protohome, nobody once said to me *ever*… 'You're doing it wrong', or 'You're not doing it right' and that is the difference… What Protohome to me if I had to sum it up in one sentence and Crisis too to be honest, is that it gets rid of your self-limiting beliefs… It gives you the right catalytic environment for you to remember what you felt like as a child, that you could do anything and that's why Tony and Sarah [two Protohome group members] now look at their rickety back fence and think 'Yeah… how are we gonna sort that', not 'Who can we get

> to help… or maybe we have to save up…' it's just a case of cracking on."

By teaching in this manner Dean facilitated a space that allowed for questioning and dissensus, for creative interrogation into normative working practices. Teaching in this way also opened up the possibility for the project to have transformative potential for him, as well as the other tutors. Yet, as the conversation above, with regards to Daz's speed at making joints hints, there were points in which group members did do it wrong. Perhaps they were too hasty, or needed to be more deliberative in their work. However it was the *nature* of the direction that we as tutors offered that was key. Instead of saying "You're doing it wrong" Dean instead discussed how Daz could improve on his techniques. This may be a mere alteration of language, but this is still important. It does however suggest that the learning process is not without its spoken or unspoken hierarchies, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5.

4.5.4 Convivial tools

Doing time consuming, sometimes arduous tasks using hand tools can often be boring and hard work on your body, your hands and your mind. But using hand tools as opposed to power tools can offer a different sense of learning and aesthetic difference. Power tools can dull character, create uniformity and might lack in personal response or connection to the material (see the work of William Morris (2008)). Sennett writes that "machines break down when they lose control, whereas people make discoveries, stumble on happy accidents" (2008: 113). And whilst hand tools might make little nicks, little mistakes on the surface of the material, power tools might chop the whole thing off.

Using hand tools, in line with the Segal method, allowed a certain kind of autonomy within the build process. Not only did we not need to purchase

expensive tools, but we also learnt about the physical properties of materials. In the workshop we had a discussion about the strengths of using hand tools over power tools, and the connection to processes of learning:

> Jane: "… using machines is cheating, it's not really made by you it's made by machines."
>
> Daz: "Aye but it'll be perfect every time you do it with a machine."
>
> Jane: "The machine's done it."
>
> Daz: "You've not learnt nothing."
>
> Jane: "So you're not really gonna learn anything are yer?"
>
> Daz: "Apart from pulling a lever."
>
> …
>
> Jane: "I… I'd rather be quite happy just doing [it] by hand because then you know you've done it and if you keep practicing with the hand tool then you've learnt how to make it properly by yourself… you can't really learn how to make a thing properly with a machine 'cause it's going to be perfect every time, but if you use… hand tools you can make it perfect your own way."
>
> Julia: "… so you think using your hands as opposed to a machine that… you've got more ownership over it?"
>
> Jane: "Yes."

Julia: "'Cause you can look at that and go…"

Jane: "I made that, it wasn't done by a machine – hah!" [Laughs]

…

Dean: "If you were using power tools all the time… you're just learning how to use a particular tool… The whole point of this project is that with very limited tools we can build something quite substantial… well you can now just with a saw and a chisel, you see that's the point, that you can make pretty much anything just with a few little tools and that's how they've done it for thousands of years. So it's more interesting because you're actually getting skilled up."

Jane: "It just goes to show… you don't need machinery to make stuff."

…

Julia: "So it means that you could go home [Daz],… you've got some wood… at home..."

Jane: "Ah, he's got a shed full."

Julia: "… get a saw…"

…

Daz: "Get meself a table and chairs up for the garden."

Julia: "Instead of thinking 'I need…"

Daz: "… to go to B&Q and buy it'."

…

Jane: "You can do it without having to go out and buy the stuff. Like at the beginning of the course I probably would of just thought 'Ah right… the weather's getting nice we'll just go to B&Q and buy it, a bench and some chairs and you're at like nearly, say… £200, but if you go and just buy..."

Daz: "… a hammer and a chisel..." [Laughs]

Dean: "Yeah and some wood and you can make it yourself."

Jane: "You can make it yourself, cheaper!"

Dean: "And it's better though 'cause it's yours."

In *Tools for Conviviality* (1973) Illich discusses how tools (in the broadest sense of the word) can be enablers but also disablers. He writes that, "There are two ranges in the growth of tools: the range within which machines are used to extend human capability and the range in which they are used to contract, eliminate, or replace human functions" (1973: 84-5). He states that, "Convivial tools are ones that are simple, and that anyone can use/learn to use and for his own purpose. They make use of cheap materials and are not easily controlled" (1973: 64). By employing a method of building that is open, simple and

affordable, the Segal method makes use of 'convivial', enabling tools - simple hand tools and standard components for construction by untrained self-builders (see Figure 36). As Illich suggests, by using simple, cheap tools a more autonomous build process may be stimulated. For us, professionals were only needed during some stages of the build and we didn't need to hire expensive tools. This links to a wider question about how certain architectural/design forms might enable people to participate in the process, particularly in a context of either constructed or real scarcity. But Illich warns that we must fight against 'radical monopoly' whereby,

> "… people give up their native ability to do what they can do for themselves and for each other, in exchange for something 'better' that can be done for them only by a major tool. Radical monopoly reflects the industrial institutionalisation of values. It introduces new classes of scarcity… This redefinition raises the unit cost of valuable service, differentially rations privilege, restricts access to resources, and makes people dependent" (1973: 54).

Figure 36: Making joints in the Crisis wood workshop.

For Illich, a 'radical monopoly' "leads to specialisation of functions", whereas 'convivial tools' "enlarge the range of each person's competence, control, and initiative" (1973: 12). 'Convivial tools' can thus operate well through practices of dwelling, or *learning-as-dwelling*, and can effectively connect the dwelling process to physical materiality.

Illich linked this discussion to what he felt to be the 'war on subsistence' in the non-western world, which was leading to a 'modernisation of poverty' (see also Escobar, 2005). He examined how the introduction of building standards in Mexico had negatively impacted the self-builder, stating that, "The code specifies minimum requirements that a man who built his own house in his spare time cannot meet" (1973: 39). He examined how new codes had created a widening scarcity of housing, since many people became unable to self-provide housing, writing that, "the technological capability to produce tools and materials that favour self-building has increased… but social arrangements - like unions, codes, mortgage rules, and markets - had turned against this choice" (1973: 40). As a result, Illich believed that new forms of professionalism,

> "… have come to exert a 'radical monopoly' on such basic human activities as health, agriculture, home-building, and learning, leading to a 'war on subsistence' that robs peasant societies of their vital skills and know-how. The result of much economic development is very often not human flourishing but 'modernised poverty', dependency, and an out-of-control system in which the humans become worn-down mechanical parts" (1973: 40).

He was concerned about individuals and communities *unlearning* skills, and he felt that this had made people less able to cope with the current (and coming) effects of scarcity.

Within Illich's discussion of convivial tools there is a sense of the dangers of unlearning skills, and thus there is a need to re-root ourselves back into certain ways of working or certain (vernacular) value systems. There is the implication in his work of (present and future) limits to material growth which links back to my conceptualisation of scarcity in relationship to degrowth and material limits in Chapter 3. As I stated, the discourse of scarcity in relation to material limits can be mobilised productively, it can highlight how people can work with relatively little, with simple, 'convivial tools', equipment and materials and making use of modest approaches to building. These processes may enable a positive discussion regarding norms/patterns of behaviour and habits of consumption (Till, 2014; Till and Schneider, 2012), what Till refers to as "new modes of design that encompass adaptation, redistribution, restarting, and optimization" (2014: 10), and so "An extractive, scarcity-producing system is replaced by a productive one" (2014: 11). These productive systems that put scarcity to work are found within the process based, flexible and adaptable approaches to housing that I have discussed in this chapter. These are approaches that not only breed new architectural forms but new (old) ways of putting those forms physically together through acts of co-production. In a period of both constructed and real scarcity, as I foregrounded in Chapter 3, the Segal system creates opportunities to challenge Illich's 'radical monopoly' by rethinking material limits through design.

4.6 Conclusion

Whilst reflecting on Bathore's material defiance in the city, embedded as it is in history and existing social structure, I am reminded of my Dad's stories of growing up playing amongst the detritus of war on the streets in England in the 1950s, making playthings out of bits of shrapnel and rubble, being creative, learning about materiality and being embedded in a historical present. This is a kind of free play that is not controlled, directed, or limited (see Colin Ward's (1961) work on adventure playgrounds in which he discusses how the absence of external rules and authority allows for a more egalitarian and democratic order to arise organically). Whilst it is difficult to imagine the norms of building in Bathore - the 'non-plan' - being replicated in the UK, there is also much to learn from these deeply embedded processes of *building/learning-as-dwelling* which counteract the top-down nature of the contemporary (UK) urban realm.

The discussion in this chapter thus connects to my second research question which queries what new forms of building practices may emerge through processes of *translation/resonance* which are participatory and have learning at their centre. It engages with wider debates concerning the expanded role of housing in lives and livelihoods, as well as how different housing typologies may aid those in material or economic scarcity to house themselves. It offers some key points of learning between the two studies by highlighting that whilst the norms of housing/building discussed here are highly diverse, rethinking how *building/learning-as-dwelling* can connect to economies and processes of sociality, may create more convivial housing typologies. Furthermore, this may also contribute to debates concerning material limits in conditions of scarcity.

In the opening section of this chapter I critiqued the overly 'brittle' nature of the contemporary urban realm and how it foregrounds economic growth often at the expense of human flourishing. Through the work of Jane Jacobs (1961

[1992]) and Richard Sennett (2008; 1970), I argued for more open, socially responsive forms of planning. However, whilst I draw on these notions, I also note that open planning is not without its ambiguities and compromises (as I examine in Chapter 6 in relationship to working with the local state).

In the latter sections of the chapter I examined the building process in each of the two studies, and through this I highlighted flexible and incremental approaches to designing, building and 'learning by doing', whereby the house is conceptualised as a process, as a verb. I highlighted how, through the building process, there are opportunities for learning, for failure and for growth. As such I conceptualised this process as dwelling in an expanded sense, whereby dwelling means to build, to preserve and care for, but it is also a learning process. Through the two case studies I discussed how the concept of *building/learning-as-dwelling* is connected to histories and cultures, to a certain sense of the vernacular, but this is not the vernacular as rooted in time and place, but one that is in flux, that responds to social and economic changes. In examining the various facets of the building process in Newcastle and Bathore I highlighted the opportunities to forge new systems of building that make use of more 'convivial tools' and processes, which are rooted in 'vernacular values' which may be more appropriate for responding to real (ecological) and constructed (economic) scarcity.

In the next chapter I build upon this discussion of building and dwelling by examining the role that processes of sociality play in the participatory planning/building process.

Chapter 5: Participation, Power and Sociality

5.1 Introduction

In this story of people and place, narratives of mutuality and sociality sit alongside those of isolation and social disorganisation. As I stated in Chapter 3, within conditions of constructed scarcity, poverty might be active in dissolving social networks and solidarities (Davis, 2006; Marcuse, 1992; Ward, 1982), however, equally, forms of sociality, agency and learning may develop in spite of such conditions (Neuwirth, 2004; Till, 2014; Vradis and Dalakoglou, 2011).

This chapter focuses on the quality of the social relationships founded in Co-PLAN's participatory upgrading project in Bathore and in the Protohome project in Newcastle. I pay particular attention to how sociality was established through the participatory process and how different forms of power were embedded within these social relationships. As such, I posit power as an effect of social interaction (Allen, 2003) which may emerge through forms of collaboration. This chapter thus foregrounds the third research question, which queries what the nature of the connection is between participation in housing and the creation of social ties and what role power plays within this. This focus on how power emerges through the participatory processes is vital, in order to critically analyse the wider value that participatory housing projects can offer, as well as the potential tensions that are harboured within such projects, particularly when working with potentially marginalised or vulnerable individuals/groups.

There are three sections to this chapter. The first section theoretically grounds the chapter, and also feeds into Chapter 6 by drawing on, and critiquing, the deliberative, consensus building methods of participation found in the work of Patsy Healey in *Collaborative Planning* (1997) and Jürgen Habermas in *Theory*

of Communicative Action (1981). I advocate that communities are not consensual and humans are not 'rational beings' working toward the same goals. Whilst this may seem antagonistic, I advocate that productive disagreement can open up quite a different form of democratic practice than consensus building methods, particularly within participatory research (Miessen, 2010; Mouffe, 2000; 1992). In considering communities and groups as agents of power and dissensus, I then turn to the work of John Allen on the *Lost Geographies of Power* (2003). Through his understanding of power as an *effect of social interaction* Allen analyses the various 'modalities' of power and how power emerges in *place*, physically, socially and psychologically. These real, felt and lived properties of power are bound up in the group scenarios that I discuss in the remainder of the chapter – what Allen terms 'power in proximity'. And whilst many of these scenarios are cases of 'instrumental power' (power over someone), I highlight there are chances for this to transform into 'associational power' (power held collectively).

In the second section of the chapter I examine the creation of social ties in Bathore. I trace these back to old relationships of *fis* (clan members) to understand how this offered a foundation for sociality in the early-mid 1990s. However I examine how these existing relationships also caused feelings of distrust and fear between *fis* from different regions. This was physically manifest in the urban environment – residents built huge fences around their properties, for purposes of privacy but also protection. Thus in the early-mid 1990s social cohesion across the neighbourhood was relatively weak. However, I analyse how Co-PLAN, in recognising this state of affairs, attempted to physically and psychologically break down the fences between people, to build networks of trust using a participatory planning methodology. However, as I highlight, Co-PLAN's aim was also broader than this. In recognising the lack of democratic values (or even an understanding of these) in a fledgling 'democracy', Co-PLAN aimed to forge an active understanding of reciprocity between the local state

and Bathore's community. I thus analyse how the community based organisations (CBOs), set up by Co-PLAN to undertake community negotiations within the infrastructure project, and other groups, such as a women's group, helped to integrate the community. However I also examine how relations of authority, persuasion and power were bound up in these groups.

In the last section of the chapter I discuss the Protohome project, and trace the establishment of trust and the building of group relationships. I discuss how group formation was key to the participatory process, and focus on the role that formal and informal conversations played in bringing people together and creating an 'ethic of care'. Sharing stories and experiences provided opportunities for self-recognition. However, drawing on notions of agonistic participation (Miessen, 2010; Mouffe, 2000; 1992) I also examine moments of conflict – when frustrations created disturbances in the convivial atmosphere.

Before I proceed, a note must be made with regards to the field of vision offered in this chapter through the two case studies. As I highlighted in Chapter 2, I am temporally removed from Bathore and this has effected the data I was able to acquire there. In Bathore interviewees were reflecting in hindsight on the participatory process that they were engaged in with Co-PLAN. Whereas in my analysis of the various guises of power and sociality that emerged within the Protohome project I could actively see and witness power - I was there, in situ. Therefore my social grounding in Newcastle is much deeper than in Bathore. This different field of vision has obvious implications. Some of the analysis from the Bathore study is based on inferences, whilst memory is always ambiguous. For instance, interviewees may have been reflecting back on the process through rose-tinted glasses, they may not remember all the tensions and power relations between community members that were present at the time, or they may have since repressed them. As Skinner writes: "Memory is subject to revision, fragmentation and deflection and is inevitably refracted upon layers of

experience" (2012: 15). Memory can thus falter and fail. It might mistake or misconstrue events or moments from the past. As a result the Protohome study may offer a more sure narrative of sociality and power in this chapter. Being present in the narrative as I was, perhaps aided me in witnessing potential tensions or ambiguities within the participatory process - the often *quiet* manifestations of power, that may be unspoken, but which may be seen or felt through bodily movements, facial expressions and spatial atmospheres.

5.2 Power and Co-operation

This section contrasts a consensus based, *deliberative* model of participation (Healey, 1997), with one that seeks a discourse of *dissensus* (Miessen, 2010; Mouffe, 2000; 1992). Firstly, I highlight the contentious nature of 'community'. Instead of conceptualising communities as bound, consensual, homogenous and harmonious, I argue that communities are often awkward, difficult and argumentative. They are full of tensions and differences, whether these tensions stem from individual personalities or wider cultural/social differences. Furthermore, importantly, the site of the community is ever changing, shifting and pluralistic. Conceptualising the community as such, and examining processes of participation through the lens of dissensus, as opposed to consensus, allows me to engage with the grounded nature of power in its various modalities. Beginning from a position of dissensus perhaps allows for a more open and honest understanding of group power dynamics. And so, in this section I ask, can dissensus be harnessed in a positive way? Can it create honesty of voice, of vision? Can it bring power relationships to the fore, so that instrumental power can transform into associational power?

Whilst drawing on the work of Patsy Healey (1997) (who Co-PLAN was heavily influenced by in their participatory planning methodology) and, in opposition, Chantal Mouffe (2000; 1992), I seek an account of power, sociality and participation that does not totally displace Healey's work, but instead threads a discourse of power and dissensus through it.

5.2.1 The myth of community

Since the 1970s participatory approaches to urban development have been increasingly employed by institutions of global power such as the World Bank and the United Nations, as I stated in Chapter 3. These approaches have been

criticised for the use of development models that are not locally specific - outside agendas often get expressed as 'local knowledge'. In response to this, participatory research has moved away from an uncritical celebration of participation (Chambers 1983; 1997; World Bank, 2000), and has begun to draw attention to the multi-scalar power dimensions at play within these approaches (Cleaver, 2001; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Fine, 1999; Kindon et al., 2010; Mohan and Stokke, 2000; Williams, 2004). In drawing attention to 'the community' as a site for action and change, many practitioners recognise that within participatory development local power relations stemming from, for example, gender, class, age and ethnicity are often smoothed over (Coleman, 2007). Furthermore, 'the local' is often viewed as separate from wider economic or political structures. In ignoring both micro and macro power relations critics highlight that participatory approaches often sustain systems of global institutional power and capitalist modernisation (that perhaps caused the problem in the first place) whilst also re-inscribing power relations through new systems of authority and domination (Williams, 2004: 558).

A disengagement with local and global power relations is also prominent within ideas of localism in the UK, as I examined in Chapter 3, whereby community homogeneity is assumed, which encourages a populist localism that leaves structural constraints (such as poverty, weak 'social capital' and isolation from institutions of power), relatively untouched. Furthermore, as I examine in this chapter, exploitation and marginalisation can occur in tightly bound communities. Nelson and Wright state that 'community' "carries connotations of consensus and 'needs' determined within parameters set by outsiders" (1995: 15), whilst Mohan (2006) states that participatory approaches often see communities as "consensual" and "harmonious". But neighbourhoods are also "tangled scalar hierarchies" (Brenner, 2004: 95) and so any pretense of neutrality only serves to hide conflict and fails to address fundamental asymmetries of power and influence (Manzi, 2015). Furthermore, a sense of

community might be multiple and ever-changing (Pain and Francis, 2003: 51), 'community' might be a site of fleeting connections, as I stated in Chapter 3 in relation to homeless street relations, or it may be ambiguous or contested, as in the case of migrants to Bathore who continued to retain a strong sense of northern Albanian identity. And so, as Cleaver writes, the community should not be seen not as static, but ever changing, as "the site of both solidarity and conflict, shifting alliances, power and social structures" (1999: 604).

5.2.2 Collaborative planning as false consensus?

This participatory turn has also been influential in UK planning policy since the late 1990s, with methods of collaborative planning (Healey, 1997) being incorporated into regeneration, housing and social policy (see, for example, New Labour's focus on social inclusion in development processes, as well as Neighbourhood Planning in the Localism Act). These approaches have been heavily influenced by Patsy Healey's text *Collaborative Planning* (1997). Furthermore, Co-PLAN's methodology in Bathore's participatory upgrading scheme was also influenced by Healey's work (who, as an academic, lives and works in the north-east of England). Healey draws on Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) to forward a dual theory and practice-based approach to participation in planning, based on 'deliberative discourse' and consensus decision making between professionals and communities. Healey's employment of 'public reasoning' based on communicative practices (such as discussion between communities and professionals) transforms the concept of 'reason' from an Enlightenment rationalist liberal-economic function to that of *collective reasoning*. She thus rejects the idea that social life has regressed to existentialist individualism. Collective reasoning is established through 'deliberative discourse', where conversational techniques offer an opportunity for knowledge exchange, social learning and building consensus. Here reflexive techniques of mediation and 'inclusionary argumentation' help to deal with

disputes in groups/communities (Healey, 1997: 50). Healey writes that this focus on collaborative social learning processes both within groups/communities and also between groups and institutions of power, helps to "build up trust and confidence *across*… fractures and chasms, to create new relations of collaboration and trust, and shift power bases" (1997: 263). Thus through communicative processes Healey states that power can transform and spread horizontally across individuals and groups. In both Co-PLAN's participatory upgrading scheme as well as the Protohome project, reflexive conversation was key to break down barriers between people and to bring forth trust, as I highlight through the empirical material below.

However, Healey has been criticised for over emphasising agency and ignoring power relationships in her work. Hillier (2002) states that she overplays the effectiveness of consensual practice and fails to pay heed to how this can lead to co-option from already dominant partners. Further to this, Healey is criticised for not attending in detail to how groups/communities and collaborative planning practitioners can/should deal with the often manipulative and bureaucratic behaviour of institutions (I examine some of these tensions in Chapter 6). However, a close reading of Healey's work reveals that she does not actually ignore power, she tends to it throughout her work. She understands that power is bound up in the way that people communicate in group scenarios, through diverse routines, styles and forms. Furthermore, she understands power not only as negative and debilitating but also as positive and transformative for communities/groups. However, because Healey advocates working 'across' difference to minimise friction between people, as she states in the above quotation, she does not actively get to grips *with* difference. Furthermore, drawing on the work of Habermas (1981), her approach to power and sociality is based on the conviction that people will always have a shared willingness to work together towards some kind of 'common good' which is based on moral ideals.

Firstly, I find this perspective reductive, especially, as I have stated throughout this thesis, in a period of austerity in which many people are living through multiple felt and lived crises, and in order to cope, social selves may retreat. Thus Healey's communicative approach may not now be sufficient for such extreme economic and political times. Secondly, the idea of 'common good' advocates that humans are rational beings and that communities are made up of people with shared *moral* values, which unite people. These collective values are seen to be prior to individual values, desires or interests. The problem with this perspective, as Markus Miessen writes in *The Nightmare of Participation,* is that whilst "it acknowledges that there are different points of view, different interests, different values… it postulates that, when all of these values are put together, they constitute a harmonious ensemble" (2010: 125). But, as I stated above, communities, and the identities that make up those communities, change, they are thus not bound, but in flux, contested, contingent and plural (Connolly, 1991).

Instead I advocate for a more agonistic approach to social learning, advocated by William Connolly (1991), Markus Miessen (2010) and Chantal Mouffe (2000; 1992), which is built on the premise that from the beginning communities are not consensual, and furthermore, the people that make up these communities are not always *rational beings.* Furthermore, there is no 'common good' (Mouffe, 2000; 1992). Instead Mouffe states that whilst people cannot be kept together by a 'common good', they can be kept together by a 'common bond' (1992: 233) and whilst different and multiple views may never be fully reconciled, this can create an active space of dissensus. And whilst this may be a challenging and disruptive space, it can also be an honest and productive space. Miessen posits this as 'conflictual participation', agonistic conflict between adversaries, not enemies, "as a productive form of interventional practice" (2010: 120). This is a discourse that I return to in Chapter 6 when I

discuss dissensus and pluralism when working with (and against) formal institutions of power.

5.2.3 Modalities of power

As indicated by an agonistic approach to participation, there is a need to recognise that participatory projects may not only produce social ties but they may also destroy them. As I examine through the empirical material below, deeply embedded power relationships stemming from, for example, gender, authority and influence, may be used by NGOs and other groups working on participatory projects as a 'way in' to the community. Whilst these tactics might help to activate positive change, equally they may also embed and heighten uneven power relations within a community/group. Some voices may be heard and some may be left silent in the participatory process. So inevitably, the dynamics of social relations in the participatory upgrading project in Bathore and the Protohome project in Newcastle must be seen through the lens of power - both the power relationships present and at play *within* the community/group and those *between* the community/group and the 'professional'/researcher.

As I highlight in the empirical material below, power is both deeply embedded within the psyche, in the imaginations that power brings into play (for example through processes of 'othering'), it is also active, embedded within actions and behaviours, and importantly, it is also *felt*. Referencing Naomi Klein (2001), John Allen (2003) writes that in the (post-structuralist) rush to see power everywhere, we find it nowhere, and in losing a sense of how the particularities of power are constituted differently over space and time we are left with an empty analysis. More problematically, he states that if we cannot identify the various *modalities* of power and how they are constituted and practiced, then we cannot challenge negative, 'instrumental' forms of power. Conversely, Allen

sees power as grounded, embedded and importantly for this conversation, as an *effect of social interaction*:

> "… power is not something that is simply extended over short or long distances, or something which radiates out from an identifiable central point, or something which engulfs place in ways that are all pervasive. Power is not some 'thing' that moves and it does not traverse and transect places or communities, so that we may be forgiven for thinking that it is all encompassing. Power, as I understand it, is a relational effect of social interaction… People are placed by power, but they experience it at first hand through the rhythms and relationships of particular places, not as some pre-packaged force from afar and not as a ubiquitous presence" (2003: 2).

Allen's focus on social interactions and how power is constituted through individuals/groups and their actions, is a key reference point for this chapter in order to analyse both the power relations within groups and between groups and facilitators (such as Co-PLAN and myself). This is what Allen calls 'power in proximity', close forms of co-option, persuasion, seduction, negotiation, manipulation, authority and coercion. These various facets of power may be entangled and may overlap, producing various positive ('instrumental') and negative ('associational') effects and can be used by both the power*ful* and the power*less* (see also Kesby et al., 2007: 21-2).

Importantly, Allen conceptualises power not as resources, or that which is held within resources, (whether these are physical, for example money, land or property, social, for example class, position, contacts or influence or knowledge-based, for example skills, expertise or institutional understanding), but instead as the *employment* of resources - the way they are *exercised*. But

power is not just the *action* of exercising resources, it is also having the *potential* to exercise them. This conceptualisation of power thus opens up new opportunities for what Allen terms 'associational power' (where power held collectively can enable people to work towards a common aim), as opposed to the more commonly conceived form of power - 'instrumental power' (power as something that is held over someone and used to obtain leverage), by highlighting that power is not always dependent on the possession of resources (Arendt, 1970; 1958). Below, through the empirical material, I highlight how opportunities for 'associational' power relations, or *empowerment*, are heightened through the creation of strong social ties within groups/communities.

Bringing together Mouffe and Miessen's work on agonistic forms of participation, which is based not on a consensual view of society but instead one of dissensus, with Allen's understanding of power as an effect of social interaction, as a complex topology which is grounded, felt and witnessed, I can bring forth a more honest and productive account of the relations of power and sociality at play within the participatory processes in Bathore and Newcastle.

5.3 Wives at the Disco: Sociality in Bathore

Bathore is slowly being integrated into the 'formal' city, yet social exclusion continues to be a problem. As King writes, "as neighbours, they represent the 'near Other' who becomes, through [migration], the 'Other within'" (2005: 143). This is perhaps a result of the neighbourhood's history – once the media's 'poster boy' for Albania's wild post-communist urbanisation. Although spatially not far from Tiranë (20-30 minutes by bus), its location lacks visibility, so the gap between the 'formal' and the 'informal' city continues to provoke tensions and political conflicts.

But this stigmatisation and the patterns of social exclusion which have been, and still are, felt and lived by people in Bathore are also instrumentalised - they also function as a mechanism to internalise inferiority within the minds of Bathore's own residents. Discussing this, Besnik Aliaj, co-founder of Co-PLAN, stated in an interview: "There is a prejudice… they feel frustrated, they do not feel totally integrated and [this] frustration carts social problems… Even in this neighbourhood the gap between poor and rich is increasing everyday".

In the early-mid 1990s inner and outer constructions of 'otherness' and distrust on behalf of Bathore's new residents to formal institutions of power were particularly high. And, as I examine below, between neighbours there was also fear and suspicion, residents rarely mixed outside of their villager and family connections. For this reason social cohesion within Bathore was limited and so the construction of internal and external bonds of trust were a key frame of reference for Co-PLAN's participatory upgrading programme, as I examine in this section.

5.3.1 Rural roots and bonds

Before examining how bonds of trust were built within the neighbourhood and between residents and Co-PLAN, Bathore's cultural context needs to be considered because this was very active in establishing (or not establishing) norms and bonds of sociality between residents in the early-mid 1990s.

Bathore is a meshwork of urban, rural, western and eastern cultures - a place shaped both by an increasingly westernised society as well as by traditional customs and law. Many social and community ties are deeply rooted both temporally and spatially elsewhere - in the past and in northern homelands. Whilst it's important not to overplay cultural retention, (whilst some facets of northern Albanian culture are reproduced, and sometimes heightened, others are subsumed and diluted), there is inevitably a kind of *hybridity* that Bathore is built upon - a certain cultural pluralism that comes from being *between* rural and urban citizens. As Josef Gugler states in relationship to urbanisation in the 'developing world' context, "becoming urban implies extending oneself to the urban culture, but does not require a commensurate rejection or loss (1992: 159)".

In Bathore rural-based relationships between individual, family and villager have been translated to the neighbourhood and have often been extended and/or deepened, in the urban context (Tarazhi, 1998: 71). And, as I stated in Chapter 2, certain traits and customs from the north of Albania were translated (often transforming in travel) to the southern plains. The traditional law, the *Kanun*, was perceived to be more pronounced in the north of Albania, and whilst during the communist era it was partially repressed, it still operated to some extent there (the socialist regime had difficulties implementing collectivisation in northern Albania and *fis* (clan members) continued to manage their fields together (Schwanke 1969; Teich 1969; Voell, 2012: 150; Zojzi 1977)). Furthermore, post-Communism, in a period of *s'ka shtet, s'ka ligj* ('there is no

state, there is no law') the *Kanun* resurface in a mutated, often misinterpreted form (King et al., 2006: 416).

However, Voell (2012: 148) writes that whilst traditional laws and kinship relations are maintained in part, they are no longer the primary frame of reference for everyday living in Albania. Whilst *fis* are an important network of dependency, and relations of patriarchy and patrilinear inheritance continue to be a key social influence (Wheeler 1998: 1-2), Voell states that *fis* are not now a clearly defined kinship unit, and should instead be conceived as an 'information network' (2012: 154). This has primarily occurred due to the division of employment and a lack of common economic interests, with *fis* no longer working communally together on the land as they did in their places of origin. Each household thus becomes responsible for itself and only in times of crisis/conflict do kinship relations become important (Voell, 2012: 157).

Whilst some *fis* and brotherhoods migrated in large numbers to Bathore, other *fis* have only a few families there. However, most families did migrate with others, and these migration patterns have strongly determined the existing social structure in Bathore. One resident stated that, "There are about 36 families that I am related to… here in Bathore. All my relatives. Like we were in Dibër [a region in northern Albania], we are now here". Whilst another, highlighting the effect of mass migration on places of origin, stated, "There were about 180 families [in the village in the north] and now there are only five families". As I stated in Chapter 4 the reciprocal act of building was largely based on existing relationships between *fis,* and this collective act allowed migrant groups to mobilise greater resources. One resident stated in an interview that, "About 35 people… from my village helped me build my home. They helped, without money, just helped", whilst another stated,

> "When I came here I brought about 15 families from Kukës [a town in the north]. We helped each other to build. We were volunteers… every week we were working for six days but on the Sunday we helped each other to build. We didn't take money, we just went there, worked, and drank *raki* or beer… we were very happy".

These bonds between *fis* are reflected in the design of housing. Many houses in Bathore have two or three floors in order to accommodate whole families as these residents stated: "In my village there were families with 40 people living in one house - all of the same family"; "I have a three-storey house. 17 people live in my house: three brothers who are all married, and we each have three children. Our parents live there as well. We eat together [and] live together, we only sleep on different floors".

Certain relationships of communalism between *fis* are therefore almost as pronounced in Bathore as they were in their places of origin. Yet social ties in the early years of Bathore's urbanisation process did not necessarily translate beyond these old relationships. Relationships between people from different *fis,* villages and regions took much longer to build, and so families were often both socially and, as we shall see, spatially, isolated from each other. There was a lot of suspicion and fear between different groups, meaning that overall social cohesion was relatively weak in the early-mid 1990s, when Co-PLAN first entered the neighbourhood. So whilst the community was large in number, it had difficulty organising and making claims on resources, services and infrastructure. As I examine below, this had implications for Co-PLAN's participatory upgrading process. Yet by highlighting how Co-PLAN bridged these fears and the social isolation that stemmed from them I aim to highlight the role that participatory processes can play in creating social relationships, even in socially tense contexts.

5.3.2 Fences and fear

Opportunities to meet and socialise beyond the *fis* were rare, as a result of the aforementioned enclosed social relationships as well as the spatial layout of the neighbourhood. The chaotic, unplanned arrangement of the neighbourhood meant that there was a lack of social and green space. Therefore the important site of the street as a place of social exchange was lacking. Furthermore, in a bid to protect their property not only from their new and 'unknown' neighbours, but also from the authorities, residents built large fences and gates around their land (see Figure 37). Sometimes these walls, still, after many years, only protect bare land or concrete building shells. Gavrosh Zela, who was working for Co-PLAN in the mid 1990s, noted that, "it was like fences and fences and fences so you could not go through". When I asked him why they built these, he replied, "It's a type of marking the territory, but also preventing people from the street to see inside. Kind of protecting, privacy". As one of the co-founders of Co-PLAN, Dritan Shutina stated to me, it was a mentality of: "I have my [property border] line, you have your line". It also reflected the political and social state of Albania at this time, when, as Zela stated, "there was no legal way of protecting your property". And so, as I stated above, communities are not homogenous or consensual, but often full of conflict and fear particularly when they feel threatened or unstable. Because of the physical and psychological separation of people from each other, this made a coherent strategy difficult for Co-PLAN, without networks of trust and norms of reciprocity. Furthermore there was a sense of 'othering', or, as I stated in Chapter 2, what Buchowski (2006) calls 'domestic orientalism' – the heightening of (imaginary) difference between new residents – they viewed each other as the 'foreign unknown'. Furthermore, because many new residents may have been previously isolated in their old villages in the northern regions of Albania, feelings of difference and fear may have been heightened.

Figure 37: Bathore's walls.

Joe Painter (2012) writes that the relationship between neighbours in an urban setting is often one of unknowability and fragility. Imaginaries of 'otherness' are created in the space between fleeting encounters. Painter highlights that often a certain kind of *wariness* permeates between neighbours, stating that,

> "… the initially unknown neighbour is potentially a destabilising and ambiguous figure, which encompasses difference and allows for radical otherness, albeit in indeterminate ways. Neighbours, after all, can be hostile as well as friendly, indifferent as well as interested, passive as well as active" (2012: 524).

Thus the neighbour is equally both site and catalyst of 'ethical friendship' and 'hostility'. There is a particularly *urban* nature to this description of relationships of lived proximity, which has implications for the rural to urban shift that Bathore's residents undertook in their migration. Painter highlights how attachment builds slowly between neighbours, but *proximity* offers the opportunity for attachment, however fragile, to become real. However, in the

case of Bathore, the houses are mostly detached, with large gardens and fences around the perimeters, therefore there was less opportunity for the forging of even tentative relationships of attachment through proximity.

Furthermore, in Bathore's case, a lack of cohesion was psychologically much deeper than mere wariness between 'unknown' neighbours. Notions and practices of community co-operation and (forced) participation were associated with Communism (as I stated in Chapter 4) and were thus rejected. Furthermore, the heavily centralised communist system prevented communities and individuals from participating in any form of democratic political life. As a result an understanding of democratic principles was lacking more widely in Albanian society. Deda states, it was "a complete top-down decision-making society" (2000: 19) exacerbated by communities' "misuse and abuse through 'voluntary work'". This engendered "an almost complete indifference of communities for finding their own solutions" (Deda, 2000: 108). As a result after Communism, individualist values replaced any sense of common purpose and solidarity that communities once had (Lazaridis, 2000; Nientied, 1998) and "The community feeling for co-operation and collaboration for the common interest disappeared. Instead, people, although physically living in a community were socially not integrated because they were afraid of each other" (Deda, 2000: 108). This had implications for Co-PLAN's upgrading scheme, however, as I examine below, Co-PLAN played an important role in building social connections across *fis*, as well as providing physical infrastructure and services.

5.3.3 Creating reciprocity

Co-PLAN noted this lack of cohesion in the early 1990s when they first entered the neighbourhood, recognising that before any walls could be broken down *physically* to make way for streets and services, they would first need to *psychologically* overcome borders. Aliaj stated in an interview that, "This is the

process of formalisation. It's not about papers, it's not about infrastructure, this is the first part, it's very important. The cycle of transformation - people should accept each other". Thus, for Co-PLAN a sense of mutual obligation needed to be harnessed for the benefit of the community as a whole, as opposed to small groups of *fis*, if the project was going to be a success.

Furthermore, what Dhamo refers to as a "syndrome of 'government dependence'" (2000: 87) and a lack of any genuine participatory culture meant that Co-PLAN initially had to create an initial understanding about *democratic* collective participation, controlled by the community, not Co-PLAN. With regards to this, Aliaj wrote that, "The situation in Albania calls for an attitude that goes beyond consumerism in which citizens are seen as customers, towards strengthening citizenship in which communities are active participants in the governance process" (2000: 18).

And so it was a dual process: first the community had to understand their role as citizens, and second, they needed to become responsible and active contributors. Shutina stated in an interview:

> "Let's not forgot that these areas were considered informal and they already had a cause and their cause was – 'we need to be recognised' and based on that cause they had something to come together, and we stimulated that process. And then practically we were arguing with them to say that, 'Look, if you want to be part of the city you have to show that you bring an added value and you share the values of the city'. Meaning that it's not only to complain but it's also to *offer* and by being organised through the scheme… you recognise that you need to come and be a contributor".

This idea of accountability is important. I discussed this in Chapter 3 with regards to the paternal and controlling tendencies which are deeply embedded within the welfare contract between state and society. Yet in Shutina's quote this is different. Although citizens were victims of structural adjustment in the post-communist period, individualism was also abound (Pojani, 2013). This was exacerbated by the fact that reciprocity between state and society had not existed in Albania during Communism therefore there was a lack of understanding with regards to this. Furthermore there was also a *refusal to create* a reciprocal relationship, as a result of anger and mistrust towards a state which was deeply corrupt (Pojani, 2013).

For Co-PLAN then, the community becoming accountable was an important step to the understanding and creation of collective democratic values and a reciprocal relationship. Yet, as I highlight in Chapter 6, and as I tend to below in relation to the formation of a participatory code between the local authority and the CBO in the participatory upgrading project, for Co-PLAN the local state was *also* expected to live up to these values and show commitment and responsibility.

As I highlighted in Chapter 2, the hallmark of a paternalistic government and the 'docile bodies' of governmentality (Foucault, 2008), is an emphasis on *duties* and *responsibilities* instead of *rights* (Roberts, 1979). Instead, Co-PLAN wanted to reorientate and move beyond this arrangement between state and citizen, which was grounded within the communist past and the heavy-handed role that the state played in each citizen's life, stating that, "There is a distinction between policies to make services more responsive to communities and those directed at empowering them" (Aliaj, 2000: 18). So for Co-PLAN this was also about creating trust between the community and formal institutions of governance. As a result, Co-PLAN acted as an intermediate between the CBOs and the Municipality of Kamëz as I examine in detail in Chapter 6.

Yet Co-PLAN didn't just understand that becoming formal 'contributors' to the city was one that Bathore's residents had yet to enact, they understood that they had *already* enacted this. They had built dwellings for themselves and co-produced resources in the face of a lack of state/welfare. Co-PLAN thus recognised the energy within this. And so, as Aliaj stated, Co-PLAN recognised informality,

> "… not only as a problem but recognising the positive sides - the energy, vitality, the will to go forward. Because despite the fact that it was chaotic and not organised, not planned, this urbanisation process shows the will of the people to move ahead - forward with positive things".

However, Co-PLAN felt that this energy needed to be channelled more systematically, and more democratically, to create wider social value beyond that of the family/*fis.*

5.3.4 Breaking down walls

As I stated above, understanding that there was a lot of distrust and suspicion both within the neighbourhood and between residents and formal institutions, networks of trust thus had to be constructed first, as Shutina said in an interview, "if they trust you then things get much more easier". Bearing in mind that before coming to Bathore many migrants were from extremely isolated communities, as I stated above, and considering the political situation at the time, which was often violent and always insecure, residents may have been more socially tentative. In recognising this, Co-PLAN realised that social barriers must first be deconstructed between people. Initial site visits to Bathore were extremely important in doing this in order to lay a solid groundwork for the

project. However, this was a very lengthy process, involving Co-PLAN's presence in the neighbourhood on an everyday basis, gradually building up trust with the community. Aliaj described this process to me:

> "So what we did was to go into those neighbourhoods initially… It was considered dangerous to enter. We entered through some contact persons – some people we considered the leaders of the community or the active people (but positive [people]), and then… we asked them to help us organise some meetings… in the whole neighbourhood… In these meetings you could present yourself and of course they would say, 'Who are you and why are you coming? Which party are you supporting?' There was a lot of fear, insecurity, lack of trust. The end of this process was clear – people don't trust [each other], they didn't know their neighbours, they didn't know who [Co-PLAN] was,… on one side, but on the other side they were desperately asking for authorities and other officials to come in their neighbourhood to consider them, so there was both sides of the story. So what we tried to do is to say that we are not part of political things here but we are here to start a process for professional reasons and we believe that being here, by contributing, we can help them, and through this they can contact the authorities and enter a positive process of integration and development… Usually we asked them, in six months to one year, to let us show them what we are and what we can do… That was not easy always, but through these… first meetings we start[ed] to build the first trust".

As Aliaj states, Co-PLAN first entered the neighbourhood through traditional village elders, or, as they became formally known in 1992, *kryeplakë*. *Kryeplakë* are intended to form a link between citizens and the state (Saltmarshe, 2001:

70-71). According to Voell (2012) their position is explained as "*Kryeplak është gjysmë Kanun e gjysmë shtet*", meaning he (they are always male, reflecting the patriarchal norms of Albanian society) is 'half *Kanun*' and 'half state' - he is a meeting point between the two. More often than not *kryeplakë* rely on their *fis* for their position, and are therefore, (in the case of rural Albania and also Bathore), often representative of traditional village structures. Commonly, they are responsible for the maintenance of order, so if conflict arises from, for example, theft, property disputes or other family/neighbourhood disturbances, they are tasked with finding a compromise that is acceptable to all parties involved. They thus act as a community mediator (Voell, 2012: 154) and are "experienced and open-minded in solving problems and conflicts" (Deda, 2000: 112). Although a *kryeplak* has no formal legal authority, "he has a moral obligation to people that trust and respect him" (Deda, 2000: 112). Often in Bathore *kryeplakë* emerged because of their charisma, experience in family business, authority or because of their age (Voell, 2012: 157). Co-PLAN recognised that alone these *kryeplakë* would not be genuinely representative of the community. As Shutina stated, one of the main challenges was that "instead of articulating things [for]… themselves, [they would need] to come up together and articulate in a more representative way". And so in the participatory upgrading project the role of the *kryeplakë* was to initially produce interest in, and raise awareness about, the project, after which they led the CBOs.

However there is a question here about who is being represented, as Shutina states. Understandably Co-PLAN needed to access the community, and the *kryeplakë* offered a simple 'way in'. However, was it just *their* interests that were being represented? Was there space for other voices to be heard? How representative these men were is difficult to say, but the fact that none of the leaders were, (or could be) women, offers some indication. Furthermore, one former *kryeplak* stated in an interview that there were a "lot of egos" amongst

the leaders which suggests internal power dimensions within the CBOs. Representation is inevitably one of the key concerns in participatory projects, especially when there are traditional social structures in place. I return to this point below when examining the role of the CBOs in the project.

5.3.5 Rilindja

> *"… we had always to have a community representation because we are not the community, we are working with them… and the idea was that we also wanted to improve the cohesion of the community because people are coming from all different areas, have different perspectives, but they were not acting as a community [and] by not acting as a community more problems are there and so on. So for us it was very important to stimulate the establishment of these community based organisations to be the representatives of these communities."*
> *(Interview with Dritan Shutina)*

CBOs were established in each subdivided zone of Bathore. In Bathore 1, the pilot zone that I was focusing on, the CBO was called *Rilindja* (meaning 'revival'). *Rilindja* worked alongside Co-PLAN and the municipality of Kamëz to implement the project. After several months of meetings, discussions and negotiations, a partnership agreement between *Rilindja* and the local authority was signed and distributed in the form of a participatory code to ensure that all groups were working towards shared goals and responsibilities. This also acted as a legal document. The role of a collectively created participatory code (instead of an imposed one) is key to create shared responsibility and ownership of participatory projects. This is not only important with regards to accountability, being rooted in a commitment to others, but this can lessen the

distance between institutions of power and communities and can thus help to initiate real change. Furthermore, including individuals in initial forms of decision-making is not just vital ethically, as I stated in Chapter 2 in relation to PAR, but it also offers stronger potential for empowerment through self-representation in the participatory process, as we shall also see in the Protohome project (Manzo and Brightbill, 2007). So, for Co-PLAN, the importance of a participatory code lay in community representation, believing that if the community helped lay the terms of the project then they would care for the project implementation and its afterlife.

Figure 38: *Rilindja* membership card.

This slow and detailed process highlights again that working in a participatory, community-based manner requires a certain form of rationalism, a certain "greyness" between open and closed forms of planning (Sennett, 2006), as I discussed in Chapter 4. Whilst Co-PLAN worked in a socially responsive way, testing strategies and approaches in a more open fashion, they were also bound to certain goals and responsibilities which required the process to be strategic and deliberate. There is of course an ambiguity to this approach. As I stated in Chapter 4, there is a tension between being strategic and spontaneous, being open and closed, being experimental whilst also being

intentional, and this is a key tension within the kind of participatory housing that I am seeking to propose.

During the participatory upgrading project *Rilindja* played a vital role in both development and implementation. Grounded in the community it acted as a key channel of information and communication, whilst also helping to define problems, priorities and solutions (Dhamo, 2000: 87). Their role also helped to create confidence in the abilities of a community that had been marginalised and ignored by formal institutions of governance, as Shutina stated in an interview:

> "At the time communities were feeling… threatened and therefore… the interest of communities to work with us was very high so there was no difficulty in creating a community based organisation... They realised that they were not only understood but gained the confidence that 'We are here and nobody can evict us, therefore we need to protect and interact with the local authorities'".

So although Co-PLAN didn't necessarily agree with the lengths to which members of the community would go to protect their properties, they realised that these concerns would need to be harnessed if they were to create an effective CBO structure, as Shutina stated there was a "need to identify among themselves to protect their interests".

A variety of issues were discussed through *Rilindja*, ranging from cost sharing and technicalities, to the individual steps of the process (see Figure 39). Each point had to be discussed and negotiated upon until consensus was achieved. As I stated above Co-PLAN was influenced by Healey's (1997) focus on deliberative discourse, of respectful 'speaking and listening to' and collective

reasoning.

Figure 39: *Rilindja's* meetings in the community. *(Source: Co-PLAN)*

Although *Rilindja* possessed 'on the ground' knowledge about the community, Co-PLAN provided training to improve skills in participatory ethics and methodologies, collaborating with official institutions of government, as well as aspects of social development such as domestic abuse and homelessness, and as one woman involved in *Rilindja* said, "How we should take care of our children, birth control, what to eat when pregnant. We had this training and then we taught this to the women of the community".

However, one of the longest and most difficult aspects of *Rilindja*'s job was to convince unwilling families to put finance into the project and give up private land (for example gardens) to make space for sewers, roads, schools and health services. This involved a lengthy process of negotiation and persuasion which

Co-PLAN termed 'rounds of negotiation'. Shutina stated that through these processes of mediation "people understood that life is negotiations, life is trade-offs therefore they have… to interact and… of course it's not easy". However these negotiations were often long and frustrating for the heads of *Rilindja* (the *kryeplakë)* and delays and unexpected issues were common, as Accioly et al. states:

> "It was nearly impossible to negotiate with the newcomers to give up their own land for the broader interest of public use, due to the fact that land often entailed a hard-earned asset for them… It takes a lot of effort to convince people who work hard to eke out a living to buy the plot of land on which they sit, and who struggled with the police to live where they do, to push back fences and to allow some space for the public" (2004: 3).

And so one of the main difficulties of persuading people to give up land was because of their initial struggles to remain on the land in the first place, as well as the work they had put into building their homes. Furthermore, the political situation at the time didn't make this process any easier, as Shutina reflected:

> "… let's not forget it's 1994/1995 and even after 2000, frustrations are high, people do not have incomes and at the same time they need to find housing, care for their kids, so let's say that the frictions were very high and if you go and say that, 'Now you have to contribute… you have to give up the land'… it's not easy, but through these processes in the end, good or bad, the communities got involved".

Shutina highlighted this consistent process of negotiation and persuasion:

> "We put the signs on the ground [indicating where the roads would be] and this was not an easy process because people were positive but then when it comes to [taking land from] your back yard everybody was saying, 'Not me, the neighbour'. But that was the process… to convince them to make them part of the community, and in the end they gave up land, we opened the space and in return we gave them gravel [for the road]".

Figure 40: Building roads in Bathore. *(Source: Co-PLAN)*

Many of the core members of *Rilindja* mentioned that the daily meetings held to discuss land and finance were the most time-consuming process:

> "In the beginning there were about 30 families that didn't want to be part of the project… so we spoke to these people individually and said, 'Come, you are a part of Co-PLAN'… because we wanted our community to get better, we were really enthusiastic and we

had the strength to do these things".

One member of *Rilindja* stated that, "There were cases when we went about ten times to a family to explain that 'you should pay the money, you should pay it'". Another said:

> "We were so tired, just imagine, we went to every family once, twice, it was a lot of work… Some of the families didn't believe us and didn't have money and between some of the people who managed the project, like me [the *kryeplakë*], there were some egos and sometimes this was difficult".

In interviews with former members of *Rilindja* as well as with Co-PLAN, the difficulties within these 'rounds of negotiation' were very apparent. This highlights my aforementioned point that communities are neither consensual nor harmonious, but they are often full of difficult relationships and characters. As a result, within these negotiations some families were excluded, not necessarily due to a lack of financial resources (they could offer their labour to the project instead), but instead, if they failed to give up land needed for roads and sewerage systems. As a result tactics of persuasion (such as offering gravel for the roads, as Shutina stated above) were used by *Rilindja* to 'convince' families to co-operate. This leads me to question whether persuasion, when used to enable/empower, which may eventually lead to wider social good (for example bringing forth a large infrastructure project) can still be understood as a form of instrumental power? Is this perhaps a grey space between instrumental and associational power?

Furthermore, within these rounds of negotiation, it is clear that the *kryeplakë* had certain authority, which, as Allen (2003) states is also a form of power. Allen writes that authority "works through relations of proximity and presence… The

more direct the presence, the more intense the impact" (2003: 10). In Bathore the leaders were close, were present and thus were able to impose themselves more readily on the community. This highlights that a fully non-hierarchical participatory process is difficult, and almost impossible. But, as Arendt (1961) claims, authority is not something that is merely *recognised,* it is also *claimed.* It is something that is held *among* people, not over them. This kind of authority might involve both informed and deeply embedded knowledge and respect. Thus the role that the *kryeplakë* played, and the authority that they held, may be closer to networks of advice. Giddens (1994) calls these figures of authority, when deeply embedded within community structures, 'guardians' of the community – people that hold but don't keep (they share) - forms of wisdom. They are community repositories of past and present knowledge. And so, as Allen writes, "The idea of a hierarchical authority based upon technical expertise or impersonal rules stands in sharp contrast… to this more *lateral* sense of authority in the social community" (2003: 58). So power in this sense is a catalyst to facilitate action (Allen, 2003: 123). It is thus possible to see how authority, modes of persuasion and negotiation may act together to realise shared aims and interests. However Allen (2003: 126) also states that these relations can be precarious given the many wills that this may involve. Furthermore, this also re-emphasises the point I made in the opening section of this chapter - that there is no 'common good' that unites people, but instead there is a 'common bond' between people, through which people can work toward similar aims (Mouffe, 1992: 233). But this 'common bond' always requires a sense of agonism, and so, as I highlighted above in relation to Healey's work, by attempting to "build up trust *across…* fractures and chasms" (1997: 263) in Bathore's community (whether this be due to cultural difference, or tensions arising through the upgrading project), it is important to query whether Co-PLAN and *Rilindja* fully came to terms with real or perceived difference. This is inevitably a difficult question to answer in hindsight, but an important one to ask, in order to critically evaluate participatory processes.

5.3.6 Social upgrading and gender

As stated above, although the persistent presence of Bathore's population in the early 1990s was based upon solidarity and acts of reciprocity and mutualism between networks of old villagers and *fis*, these relationships did not extend much beyond this, therefore overall social cohesion was limited. Thus, what is interesting about Co-PLAN's approach is the primacy that was given to building social, as well as physical infrastructure. Many participatory upgrading schemes, particularly those funded by the World Bank, provide only the physical infrastructure to communities and don't focus on building social support networks in what might be fractured and poverty-stricken communities (Deneke and Silva, 1982). Instead, Co-PLAN set up a project newspaper in order to disseminate information and awareness to the community on a quarterly basis, as well as a Youth Group and a Women's Group called *Women's Future* which I discuss below.

Co-PLAN recognised that in northern Albania a gendered hierarchy existed and this was translated to Bathore and was reflected in decision-making processes within the project. As King et al. (2006; 2003) have found in their study of Albanian migration, traditional notions about the role of women strongly constrict female life trajectories, particularly in the northern regions of the country. Patriarchal traditions evidently have deep roots in Albanian society, and whilst during Communism some advances were made in this respect, in the post-socialist period the situation regressed for women (King et al., 2006). Women's participation in the social and cultural life of the community is strongly shaped by patriarchal norms and nexus' of oppression and submission (see Haarr, 2013; Haarr and Dhamo, 2009 on domestic abuse in Albania, who found that incidences of domestic violence escalated in the 1990s as families experienced significant stresses and strains related to transition – for example

high unemployment rates, severe housing shortages, and escalating social unrest and violent street crimes).

In Bathore in the early-mid 1990s I was told that most women would only leave the house if they were accompanied by a man. There was thus a spatial division between the private world of the woman and the public world of the man. Furthermore, women would not take part in family decision-making or money issues, and in general men had a much greater role in community politics. As I uncovered in this research, men are often given the 'authentic voice' to represent their communities (as in the case of the *kryeplakë).* In interviews, it was often only the men of the household that spoke, and although women were present, they would often only provide refreshments and then leave the room. On a few occasions men actively hindered their wives from answering questions, and at other times women would only speak if they were without their husband or son/s. There was however a marked difference with younger women and widowed women, who were often more open to offer a point of view.

But, as I uncovered, it was often the women who managed to break down cultural and psychological borders between community members. It was a group of women who opened Bathore's first school, initially teaching children in an old factory and then campaigning for a school building, and the organisation *Women's Future* played an important role in bridging cultural boundaries and transgressing perceived notions of 'difference' within the community through social events (to encourage women to come out of the home), educational activities (because many women were illiterate), community dinners and competitions. An initiator of *Women's Future* stated that they wanted,

> "… to make women powerful and to find jobs for them. Because they had never studied it was very difficult for them to find jobs…

> We started free courses for them in hairdressing, clothes making and cooking so they were able to take up a profession… We also did training for these women because sometimes they were hit by their husbands".

Through social activities the group aimed to create a more inclusive community by encouraging an exchange of cultures through swapping traditional foods and clothing. These new social ties became important networks of support for Bathore's women.

However, the leaders of *Women's Future* stated that it was difficult at the beginning to persuade women to come to the centre and leave their traditional roles as wives and mothers, but by offering food and clothing they began to engage with the community, and after a while started coming of their own accord:

> "In the beginning it was very difficult because the people that came from other areas brought with them their own cultures and traditions and it was hard to speak and communicate with them... [However] we changed the traditions and women started to go out of the home".

Again we can see tactics of persuasion at work, but in this case it was a form of power that was associative, that aimed to bring forth sociality and generate empowerment for Bathore's women. Furthermore, this wasn't just about sharing cultures and making women more visible in the community, it was also about redefining the *role and utility* of women, as social and economic actors in their own right (Chell, 2000). As Anthias (2000) has noted, migrant women often thrive with new opportunities created in new contexts. As such, many of Bathore's women have experienced an improvement in their social position as a

result of this trans-cultural process and some may now have more control over economic resources and social lives, although it is difficult to tell the extent of this, and is beyond the scope of this research. But, as one man mentioned to me: "I even take my wife to the disco now!" Furthermore, in light of a lack of building work, and men returning from Greece and Italy because of the financial crisis, it is often the women who are the breadwinners, who go out to work, and men who are 'surplus', as one of the leaders of *Women's Future* stated:

> "Now the men don't work very hard because they used to build houses but now the building has finished and there are no jobs in this sector. The women now work very hard - they work in the factory and they now have the power".

5.3.7 A mentality change

> *"…the main thing is the mentality… from enemies to partners, that was the philosophy… What we noticed, in a certain moment was people removing the fences themselves."*
> *(Interview with Besnik Aliaj)*

A change in 'mentality' was a subject that came up frequently in interviews stemming from new networks of trust between Bathore's residents and formal institutions of power, which were catalysed through the participatory upgrading scheme. This term was also used by Protohome group members when we undertook an evaluation of the project with them. Here 'mentality' suggests a shift in a 'way of seeing'. For residents of Bathore this meant a recognition of their role as citizens, both within the neighbourhood (how they engaged with other residents) but also between themselves and the local state (a sense of

reciprocity was created). But this mentality change occurred through a learning process. This meant encouraging the *unlearning* and *relearning* of their role as citizens. Responsibilities changed and residents realised that they must be more accountable for their community and work with the formal institutions of power. As a result a reciprocal relationship between state and society, however fledgling and knotted with tensions, was created. Self-representation through the various CBOs and groups was key to catalysing this change in mentality and a certain process of empowerment. However, as Kesby et al. (2007) state, often empowerment can be temporary, it can be hard to maintain, as soon as the 'agency', the 'researcher' or the 'professional' moves out (and also takes with them certain resources), people can fall back into old routines, or in Bathore's case, re-erect the walls. Yet as I found, going to Bathore over 15 years after the project had ended, the roads and open spaces remain and friendships have persisted.

There is perhaps more potential for a mentality change to endure when the community is place based. This is different from the Protohome project, where disparate individuals came together. Although we were 'based' as a group within the space of Crisis' workshop, this was not permanent and was not the space of the home/neighbourhood. However, for Bathore's residents who *are* place based, the physical and social act of removing borders between neighbours has created bonds between people that persist to the present day. Weddings across birthplace borders occur, language changes, women go to the disco. So, whilst there is loss, there is also gain. These processes of social and cultural adaption are what Gilbert and Gugler (1992) call 'biographic change' – learning and acquiring new norms of behaviour to suit a new cultural context, as one of the leaders of *Rilindja* stated in an interview:

> "The project changed my mentality of how to live. In my county, I was just a teacher and just went home every day after work, but

> when I came here and started to be one of the leaders of this project, it changed the way I think about life. It changed my way of living in a community. My neighbour is not a teacher [like me], he is a simple worker, a farm worker, but we exchanged traditions and we learnt a lot from each other".

This section has highlighted that whilst initial bonds of sociality had historical weight in Bathore, new networks of sociality were created outside of this temporal space, in the physical space of a new neighbourhood. But as I have highlighted, this was not without its problems for Co-PLAN and the CBOs during the participatory upgrading project. As a result this process was not without tactics of persuasion and authority. This suggests that communities are not bound, nor homogenous, and often deliberative discourse is not sufficient to deal with the many wills within communities. In the next section I assess how bonds of sociality were created within the Protohome group and how modalities of power came forth through this. Inevitably this is a group much different to Bathore's community, being much smaller in number, more disparate, not place based, with much less organisational mass and who are often more psychologically marginalised. However there are some important points of resonance between the two experiences of sociality and power, including the effect that integrated participatory projects can have on individual and group flourishing – particularly with regards to how they see themselves in relation to each other (as the quote above highlights), as well as how modes of power and (positive) authority can provide catalysts for projects, and can provide the means to involve more people. Furthermore, another key area of resonance is the importance of spending time building trust at the beginning of a project, particularly if working with potentially marginalised groups.

5.4 "...bonding, gettin' to know everyone - yer not gettin' a cuddle!"[7]: Social Ties and Protohome

As I stated in Chapter 3, whilst homeless people are often subject to both physical and psychological exclusion and isolation and various modes of 'governmentality' via the criminal justice system, the hostel, the Jobcentre, they are not just passive recipients of these systems. Instead, everyday moments of care, sometimes sustained, sometimes fleeting, also make up life for homeless people. But moments of care and connection not only extend from everyday modes of living, through momentary or ephemeral contact with people on the street, but, also in this research from the participatory process, which often led to sustained friendships, as I examine in this section.

Inevitably, as I stated in the Introduction to this chapter, the understanding of how power and sociality came forth through the Protohome project is different to that of Bathore. In Bathore I was temporally removed from the participatory upgrading project, however in Newcastle my social grounding was much stronger. I was able to witness the creation of social ties and the impact of power relations. This offers a certain strength in that my discussion here is more present and less ambiguous. However, it is also important to take into account that because I was bound up this project, and the people involved in it, my own view of this process might be coloured somewhat. Furthermore, as a researcher there may have been times when I didn't 'read' or comprehend a situation effectively, particularly when there were unseen relationships, whether these be of power, sociality or both.

[7] Interview with Protohome group member.

5.4.1 The formation of trust

Inevitably, as I stated above, because the members of the Protohome project were perhaps more vulnerable and did not carry with them existing social connections within the Crisis workshop (like the *fis* in Bathore), the initial process of building trust was perhaps even more vital than in the upgrading project in Bathore, in order to build confidence and working and reciprocal relationships. In Bathore interviewees described a point, 'a moment', in which people starting knocking down walls and opening up gates. This 'opening up' happened both physically and psychologically. But when did this happen in the Protohome project? When did people feel trusting of me, the other tutors, and also their fellow members? When did it become comfortable to share personal stories and experiences? When were difficult subjects brokered? When did people feel comfortable to *argue*? There was, of course, no 'one point' – this is inevitably subjective. Because the project was (and needed to be) reflexive, people entered at different stages, and whilst some people came into the workshop on the first day very confidently, for others it took weeks to feel comfortable. However I was surprised at how much members opened up personally - telling and sharing became the norm in the workshop.

Group relationships were built gradually, session by session. Drawing on the work of Yalom (1970) into interpersonal theory and small group development, we saw an initial phase of *hesitation*, whilst members oriented themselves both physically in the workshop space and socially with other members and tutors. As Dean, the lead joiner, recalls, "when we em, first started, everyone was quite insular and working on their own", whilst Daz said, "A lot of people were quiet at the start compared to now". Furthermore, some people were quite wary of each other as Nyree noted: "I think… we put on a lot of layers, don't we?" There was then a second phase in which individuals felt that they could open up to others and perhaps offer a viewpoint. This was a moment in which the seeds of trust and confidence were growing. There was then a third phase

when the group become extremely close, supporting each other on an emotional and a technical level, not just in the workshop but also outside of this space. There was a certain reciprocity between facilitators and group members, as I discussed above in relationship to Bathore's participatory upgrading scheme – a certain form of mutual respect grew. And this reciprocity continued after the project through friendships and informal support mechanisms, as the story of Daz supporting the young group member on the streets in Chapter 3 emphasised. But it must be noted that some people found the establishment of trust easier than others - some were actively *looking* to build trust and relationships, whilst others were more isolated (whether choosing to be or not).

5.4.2 Sharing stories

Sharing personal stories helped build trust during the workshop process, but at the same time it was also an indication of the strength of trust already formed. Discussions took place in both an informal setting (over cups of tea and biscuits in the workshop, on a windy beach in Northumberland or whilst eating crisps and sandwiches on the Protohome site), as well as in a more formal setting (during focus groups and interviews). Whilst a conversational, fluid form of discussion helped in individual interviews, it was often easier to get members to open up in informal group scenarios.

In interviews we always asked members how/whether they would prefer to be recorded (with film/voice recorder), but the majority of members had no preference. However, often their reply: "I don't mind" was reflective of something deeper, of not knowing what to do, or say - how to answer when faced with a *choice*. I feel that there are a number of reasons for this – a mixture of the deep systems of governmentality active in their lives, as well as the resultant deep disempowerment which stems from never having been *asked* what they would like, never having been offered choice – pre-written

guidelines, rules and regulations making up the stuff of many of the members' daily lives. This lack of communication was often difficult to disturb or transform. Yet towards the end of the project those that were the most quiet did begin to ask questions, to offer a perspective, however I don't feel that the project was long enough for these processes to be fully formed – timescales being a real tension in the project. Furthermore, often those that were very chatty in group conversations only offered brief answers in individual interviews. Peter, for example, would enter into long monologues about his family history, long past Christmases, his divorce, his alcoholism, his homelessness, but then once I was alone with him in a more formal interview environment, although I asked 'open' questions, he would answer very briefly, with "yes", "no", "maybe" or "I don't know".

In group scenarios it was much easier to get members to open up, which is interesting considering the personal nature of some of the conversations we shared. Whilst sometimes group conversations/focus groups were spaces of heightened emotions, at other times they seemed cathartic. Often they played a role in alleviating vulnerability and social isolation (Sanders and Brown, 2015), as Nyree stated,

> "I've always loved people and loved being around people and the homeless part, however temporary it is, kind of isolates you. Whether it's intentional or not, it does, whether it's a mixture of your feelings or just circumstances or whatever… if you base your life around what that connection is with other people then when bits are missing it's hard".

Sometimes very personal and difficult stories of homelessness emerged, like Nyree stating, "…once you start feeling unclean about yourself. You're doing your teeth in a supermarket before going to bed at night, em, that takes a little

bit of your confidence away, and self respect and stuff", and Daz discussing his life history:

> "It was her [Jane, his girlfriend, now wife] that opened me eyes. Saying there's more to life than just selling [drugs] and EDL [English Defence League] marches and all this, that and the other… I used to go looking for fights and all that… Go and do [beat up] all the people that they [the EDL] are against and all that. Go down to South Shields just for a rumble and all that… I've quietened down any amount me… I used to live for a Friday night and drink and wake up in the police station… And jails. Nah… it's too much… It's horrible not knowing what's gannin' on on the outside. I learnt the hard way but I learnt".

Perhaps the Crisis workshop was seen as a safe space? Perhaps there was something about the atmosphere that enabled people to share stories? This might be a therapeutic process, as Nyree said, "it's that opportunity to share isn't it? That's what makes Crisis so strong - that a conversation like that can set you up for the rest of the day". So some members found longer term support through conversations that were able to move beyond a certain room or space, which could be taken with them throughout the day, or even the week. Group conversations also created opportunities for challenging/changing deeply engrained perspectives or for learning, particularly when we undertook focus groups around a particular subject like self-build or homelessness.

In these stories there were many resonances of experience between different life histories – like Owen's tattooed arm, displaying the number '141', and Dean's (the lead joiner) arm painted with the number '33' – both house numbers – the last places where their families were happy together, the last places that felt like 'home'. Dean had experience of homelessness so many of

the members' stories resonated with him and he was able to offer a very personal perspective. This form of self-identification can be vital in order to break down any initial barriers between researcher/tutor and member, as well as between the 'housed' and the 'not housed' (see McFarlane and Hansen, 2007 on their research with disabled people). In these stories a certain kind of proximity emerged, not just spatially but also experientially. Layers of personal history became entwined together.

5.4.3 Becoming "an extension of each other"[8]

> *Dean: "…without us all working together em…"*
>
> *Tony: "It's not going to work is it really?... If all the cogs aren't working in the machine then it stops, it doesn't work."*
>
> *…*
>
> *Nyree: "The best part of it is watching people come together and share a task and think about their place when this thing comes together and opens, but it's not just that end thing, it's the process of doing it."*

Fundamentally, relationships between group members were at the core of the Protohome project. This came up most resolutely in individual and group evaluations. In recognition of the need to build strong interpersonal relationships when working with potentially vulnerable people, and on a project that could be dangerous, the first 11 weeks in the Crisis workshop was vital, not just to build skills but also social relationships.

[8] Quote from Dean Crawford, Protohome tutor.

Whilst working as a team you're often holding someone's back, physically supporting them to take the weight of a piece of wood when their strength is waning, offering a seat to someone when they're tired, offering them water when they're thirsty, knowing what tool to offer them next, understanding the mental and physical strengths and limits of each other, sharing responsibility when something goes wrong, when something physically falls apart, when a piece of wood splits, when a concrete paving stone cracks, when a cut slips off the pencil line. Dean described how we needed to be "an extension of each other", if someone "put[s] their hand out, I'll put the right tool in their hand and vice versa, because you're kind of always watching what other people are doing". These collective working practices were of great importance because, as Dean said, in large scale builds, "if one thing stops functioning then the job wouldn't get done". In the worst case, if we failed to work together, to watch out for each other, then someone could get physically hurt. And so the initial process of group formation within participatory housing is a key aspect, as this group conversation highlights:

> Sarah: "… to me it was like learning to work with other people. You know people that you haven't really met and known as long, so you kind of get the… gist of the ups and downs of people never mind just yersel, it's how other people… work around yer and how [you] would work with other people."
>
> Tony: "'Cause we all stuck together and eh, acted like a proper team, looked after each other, instead of arguing and squabbling on."
>
> …

> Nyree: "It just happens naturally and organically. It's not a construct, it's not, it's not something that's intentionally happening… I mean within that first day we were a family, and anyone coming in, you know, people were helping each other out or checking out, like Owen coming over to check that I had the right saw, or holding [the wood] for me… It's like that social glue. It's like these are dry joints with no glue necessary, and this is a project with no glue necessary. Ah, I sound like such a hippy don't I!"

As I stated above, these relationships were nurtured by including plenty of time for informal conversation and never underestimating the importance of listening, providing an ear, when there was stress or emotion or simply when someone had an interesting idea for the project. Rather than being 'designed into' the project process from the start, this emerged through practice (Heron and Reason, 1997). Commitment to the project and the people within it came through in moments of mutual support, listening, spontaneous acts of kindness (like having a disagreement with someone and then in the next breath asking whether they would like to share a cigarette) and shared laughter (like Nyree saying to Daz: "you can just brighten up a room with the words you come out with"). The workshop became an important site of sociality, not merely a place of learning, but of uninhibited chatter - the laughs, the energy giving the room its rhythms. So what members described as the "bonding experience", only occurred through making space for these conversations, whether meaningful or not, to take place. As a result, coffee breaks were often longer that the practical 'doing'.

There were also specific actions that we took to allow the group to take responsibility for the project as a whole. In advance of the site build Nyree thought it would be a good idea to create a Group Contract (see Figure 41), which, similar to the participatory code in Bathore, was an agreement between

participants, to share responsibility. Having used them in other classes at Crisis she said, "it was a sort of, um, thing that we all agreed to but that we *all* made. It wasn't the teacher saying to us…", it was about "sharing responsibility… for each other, for the equipment, for the wood, for the whole build and for the project itself". This aided members to take collective ownership of the project and so a relationship of reciprocity between group members was forged - rooted in a commitment to others, to share roles and responsibilities. This returns us to the idea of an 'ethic of care' (Manzo and Brightbill, 2007) that is so important in participatory build projects, particularly when individuals' safety is reliant on each other's behaviour. But the creation of the Group Contract also offered members the opportunity to represent themselves, as Nyree stated, "It wasn't the teacher saying to us…". This was particularly important once the project was 'live' and open to the public when members took on a role of introducing, explaining and presenting the project to others, whether this was to general members of the public or seemingly 'important' people from the local authority and beyond (see my discussion of this in Chapter 6).

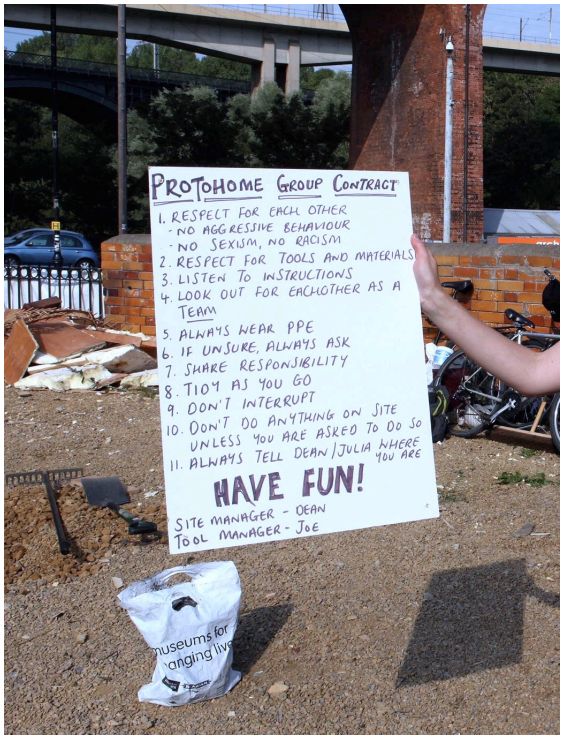

Figure 41: The Protohome group contract. *(Source: John Hipkin)*

5.4.4 Power and proximity

> *"It sounds like a, eh, like a dickish thing to say that 'I'm in charge', but I have to be."*
> *(Quote from Dean Crawford, Protohome tutor)*

Because of the potentially dangerous nature of participatory build projects, it was important that the tutors held some form of authority, therefore the process could not be completely non hierarchical. Yet, as I stated above in reference to Allen (2003) and the role of the *kryeplakë* in Bathore's upgrading project, authority need not be a negative exercise in power, instead authority and expertise can enable. In this sense 'leaders' or 'tutors' can be important catalysts for knowledge production and learning. In particular, as I stated in Chapter 4, Dean attempted to expand the analytical skills of the group by asking members: 'What shall we do next? What's working? What's not working?', and to assess and change the course of the process and to problem solve. So instead of leading members directly, he led them indirectly. Furthermore, as tutors, our own normative working practices were often challenged, we were also subjects of learning throughout the project. And so, as I stated in the opening section of this chapter, group dynamics should open up opportunities for challenging, questioning and dissensus - for creative interrogation into normative, professional working practices. The 'expert-amateur' binary can be crossed and the expert's knowledge can be harnessed in a way that can be enabling and can have transformative potential for both learner and tutor.

As I stated above in relation to working "*across*… fractures and chasms" (Healey, 1997: 263) it is important not to gloss over or ignore power relationships but to actively highlight and antagonise potentially exploitative or

manipulative relationships that occur within or through participatory projects or which frame participants' lives in a wider sense (such as relationships to the welfare state or to homeless services) (England, 1994). This is in line with the sense of agonism that I discussed above. Furthermore, the social dynamics that were constantly changing and being reproduced meant that tensions and power relationships did occur within the Protohome group. However, it must also be stated that there was also (presumably) lots that I didn't see – lots of small inequities and power relations that went relatively unnoticed. Given that all socialities are situated and changing there would have been spoken and unspoken tensions at play that I wasn't privy to, thus there is a *situated seeing* of power and its modalities that I may have failed to witness whilst I, as a facilitator, was trying to manage the relations between people (and much more). As I highlighted in Chapter 2, all perspectives and fields of view are partial.

However there were times when power relationships came to the fore in a very obvious and antagonistic manner. Often external factors impacting members' lives affected the atmosphere of the whole group, and these were particularly difficult moments, as Nyree stated, "not a one of us hasn't had some kind of like hellish struggle to do with health,… money, benefits, our housing situations… I mean every one of us has had problems but coming to this gave us the strength to deal with them". And on occasions tensions did emerge in the group, particularly with individuals who worked less well in the group scenario or were going through a difficult period personally. For example, for Peter, who went back on the streets during the project, personal difficulties often emerged in the workshop - sometimes due to a lack of sleep, or because of his mental state of mind, or because it was raining, or when his belongings got taken by NE1 (Newcastle's Business Improvement District company) or when he'd had a brush with a police officer. These tensions emerged in the workshop and were sometimes difficult to deal with, as this conversation

highlights:

Julia: "What's wrong Peter?"

Peter: "I wish I could hit her with a hammer but I know I can't."

Julia: "Who?"

Peter: "You've got to try and think about yerself man, not other people. This has gone skewwhiff 'cause I'm asking Nyree to work together and help us but she's gannin deeing her own thing. Work together as part of *a team."*

Nyree: "I agree. I agree."

Peter: "Well if you agree *why were you fucking over there?!"*

Julia: "Peter, come on!"

Nyree: "If you say it nicer, you see because [you said], 'Why are you fucking…' I'm thinking...'"

Julia: "Yeah, just say it nicer Peter."

Nyree: "If you say it nicely I might *consider* it."

Peter: "Right right. You want the nice nice approach."

Julia: "And you don't need to swear like."

> Peter: "I won't, I won't, I won't."

Nyree reflecting back on this conversation later in the project, stated:

> "Well personally for me speaking it was just like any other family. There were moments that were tricky… there were moments when there was a bit of miscommunication or there were moments when people were just upset, and because of that whole supportive environment, because of that openness,… because it was family, we all supported each other through those tricky moments so they never lasted".

As I stated above, power is not some ubiquitous force felt and practiced from afar, but something, which as Allen (2003) highlights, is in *proximity*. Yet Allen also states, that whilst proximity can create power and authority, it may also open up opportunities for the building of trust. Allen writes that the "stretching of social relations is actually generative of power" (2003: 55) – by building social networks, the amount of power in circulation (for better or worse) can actually increase. We can see this in a positive sense through Bathore's upgrading programme, particularly through the work of *Women's Future.* And this was also true in the case of the Protohome project. Whilst there were moments of 'instrumental' power – power held over someone, rooted in some sort of conflict, as we can see in the above conversation, there were also moments of self-discovery – of 'associational' power – power rooted in mutual action and in the formation of a 'common bond' (to use Mouffe's (1992: 233) term), and a sense of reciprocity (as I highlighted in Bathore, both between community members and between the community and the local authority). There were also moments when instrumental power was transformational, was somehow productive – perhaps it was a breaking point that needed to occur to move beyond it – like the heated conversation between Peter and Nyree.

Perhaps only through the practicing of instrumental power, and the realisation of this, can it be fully tended to? Perhaps this is when real understanding between people is forged? When something is challenged, perhaps it changes? This is perhaps a kind of dissensus that can lead to personal realisation.

5.4.5 Confidence and repair

In the Protohome project we also witnessed how strong group relationships can build personal confidence and trigger processes of social repair. Nurturing sociality can be an important way to aid social isolation, as I highlighted at the beginning of this section. Friendship, the 'wrapping together' (Jackson, 2015) of people, doesn't end when the project finishes, but it can be a catalyst for trying new things, forging new opportunities. New confidences are grown and some members mentioned that 'new mentalities' came to the fore, as I stressed in the account of Bathore above. In my narrative of Bathore I highlighted how this meant a shift in a 'way of seeing' which occurred through a learning process – when residents relearnt their role as citizens and enacted a sense of reciprocity between themselves and the local state. For the Protohome group members this was also a shift of 'view' or 'perspective' – perhaps not as strong as that of Co-PLAN's project in Bathore – the Protohome project being only a small scale and short-lived project. However, for many members this mentality change emerged from a new sense of individual confidence, and became a catalyst for how they imagined their own futures. Thus new mentalities can be powerful transformational tools which move beyond psychological space and into physical lived lives.

Jane was one member of the group who lacked confidence. She came to the workshop with Daz, her partner (now husband), and always stayed close by his side. In group conversations she would agree and nod along, but her eyes were fixed down on the table. When she did speak she might replicate Daz's words:

Daz: "It's just getting to know people innit?"

Jane: "Getting to know people."

Daz: "Getting the vibes of people. Seein…"

Jane: "Getting the vibes…"

Until one day on a trip to the Protohome site, Daz had to leave whilst we were having a cup of tea in the farm nearby, whilst Jane stayed:

Daz: "I left her on the farm the other day, she wouldn't have dared stayed when I left."

Jane: "Normally I would have left as well, I would have gone."

Daz: "That's how I know she's comfortable."

Julia: "Yeah."

Jane: "Cos confidence…"

Daz: "… It goes a long way."

Jane: "… used to be a really really really big problem for me to get to know people. Kind of thing, to…"

Daz: "Trust in people."

> Jane: "Aye. Trust in people and stuff. It's like yes… last week it was like, 'Right, taraa! Bye! [to Daz], I'm gonna stay.'"

This growth in confidence was grounded within the social relationships – within providing an environment in which members were comfortable. Furthermore, in the evaluation a growth of confidence seemed to be key for members, whether this be the confidence to get up, take a shower and leave the house, to build a piece of furniture, or to speak in public (the members presented the project at an event at Protohome organised by the Homes and Communities Agency, which involved invited housing and architecture professionals from local councils and beyond). In the conversation below we can see how this confidence was beginning to shape their everyday lives:

> Tony: "… unfortunately I was on the streets… for just under a year before I actually signed up for Crisis… It's not actually very nice being on the streets but now I'm back to be honest with you. I'm feeling confident, I've got a bit more experience and, touch wood, I'm never back there in that situation again."

> Daz: "… getting up in the morning and getting motivated to come here… It changes your life, it's just not living the same lifestyle, open to try new things like that."

In revisiting these memories of collective building, learning, sharing and laughing there is a real sense, for me, that it is the creation of social ties for those that may be physically or socially isolated, that may be stuck in certain rhythms and routines, that is the most vital aspect of the participatory building process. Sociality creates opportunities for change, it creates trust and confidence, but as I have highlighted, feeling 'at home' with those around you can also create 'associational power' or 'empowerment'. Yet there is a certain

agonistic honesty to these closely observed processes of group sociality, which provide real opportunities for personal and collective growth.

I have managed to follow the many different routes that members have taken since the project ended, and how these changes have impacted their lives beyond the project. Some have taken these changes with them and have entered employment, training or are now in stable housing. For others such a project was too fleeting and the issues engrained within their lives too embedded and severe. Nevertheless there is some degree of evidence to suggest that there is a certain level of social remediation that can occur through such embedded, participatory processes. And whilst this was a fleeting project, longer projects might bring forth even more positive results, and perhaps longer lasting change for group members.

5.5 Conclusion

Participatory processes that have a strong focus on social relations can disturb notions of difference and can act as catalysts for wider changes in lives and livelihoods. Evidently, within these processes, micro power relations can sometimes be problematic and sometimes productive. 'Instrumental power' can become 'associational power' (Allen, 2003) and this transformation may occur through potentially authoritative or even negative social relations.

This chapter has thus tended to the third research question, which queries what the nature of the connection is between participation in housing and the creation of social ties as well as power relations. Through a critical examination of the processes of participation in both Bathore's upgrading project with Co-PLAN and in the Protohome project I have highlighted the agonistic nature of participation, emphasising that communities are not consensual but are full of different world-views. As I have examined through the Bathore study, there was much fear and distrust between neighbours and therefore social cohesion was relatively weak – residents were spatially and psychologically removed from each other. Furthermore, for members of the Protohome project networks of trust first had to be created between group members and tutors before 'sharing' could take place, and even when trust had been built there were still "tricky moments". As I have highlighted, negotiating these differences is sometimes a lengthy and frustrating process, involving the need for forms of (positive) authority and persuasion. However, confronting these tensions through agonistic honesty may be more productive than enforced consensus within participatory arenas. And so whilst participatory research has been criticised for ignoring both the micro and structural power relations within groups and between groups and wider institutions of power (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Frideres, 1992; Wynne-Jones et al., 2015), this chapter has sought to speak to those critiques, by foregrounding the presence of power in

its many guises, whilst also highlighting that a more agonistic approach to participation may highlight and antagonise power relations, and thus create opportunities for more critical participatory research.

Here, the difficulties that *Rilindja* faced in persuading community members to contribute to the upgrading programme in Bathore, as well as the clash between Nyree and Peter in the Protohome project are perhaps illustrative of this. In the example from Protohome this dispute brought group tensions into the immediate present, it foregrounded certain mentalities, psychological states and frustrations about ways of working (or not working). Whilst it was a fracturing moment, it was also a disruption that needed to happen - a 'breaking apart' - through which learning and mending takes place. As a result there is a certain honesty in the realisation that groups and communities are not consensual, but full of awkward, difficult characters, people that want to do it their own way, or not do it at all, people that are bound not by any 'common good' or undefined/predefined moral ideals, but instead by a 'common will' (Mouffe, 1992: 233). Communities creak and groan by their very nature, but they may creak and groan even more in periods of scarcity, and this is exactly why it is the nature, (and I might add, the strength), of the social relations that is key here (Kropotkin, 1902). Through the creaks, the cracks and the groans we can learn about each other and grow in confidence. And so the power relations forged through these participatory processes are both instrumental and associational, the instrumental can *become* the associational, and the associational can grow in social proximity. As I state in the next chapter, these disturbances in the social body are important, they are moments of honesty that challenge normalcy, through which individuals can identify and transcend, yet always take the memory with them.

In the next chapter I build on this discussion of agonism, but I move from the micro to the macro scale. I draw again on Mouffe (2000; 1992) and Miessen's

(2010) work, using this to argue for *conflictual pluralism* when working both with and against formal institutions of power.

Chapter 6: Space of Negotiation

6.1 Introduction

In previous chapters I have discussed feeling *in between* during this research (Katz, 1994) - not only geographically, but also epistemologically and methodologically. One aspect of this concerns the relationship between participatory housing, the state and other institutions/organisations of power. This chapter analyses these often ambiguous and often contested relationships, and thus pays heed to my fourth research question that asks: How might participatory housing practitioners/groups work institutionally with formal mechanisms of power, such as the state and other agencies, to scale up participatory approaches to housing, and what is at risk when they do so? In proposing a framework for participatory housing it is important to analyse and understand what other actors need to be involved and how participatory practitioners/groups might work with them in order to achieve the best outcome.

At times I have felt that participatory approaches to housing which have a strong ethical core should refuse to engage with institutions of power and should be overtly political in their approach (as can be seen in many housing activist and squatting movements throughout the world (Bayat, 2004; Vasudevan, 2017; 2015a; 2011)). Furthermore, I have also emphasised the dominating, repressive and controlling influence of formal governance structures, and conversely I have drawn on theories and practices of housing that have resident control and autonomy at their centre. Yet, at other times, and particularly during the Protohome project, I have been aided by local authority officers and by the charity Crisis, I have exchanged knowledge with them and I have witnessed compassion from them with regards to the issue of housing need.

Furthermore, throughout the course of this research I have realised that because housing is subject to many structuring forces, reliant as it is on the acquisition of land and finance as well as the need for support mechanisms, it is difficult to think how participatory housing might operate beyond the boundaries of the local state. Participatory housing may rely on partnerships with developers, local colleges, universities, charities and housing associations, which may make the process even more complex and riddled with dilemmas. Additionally, for participatory housing projects aiming to work with potentially isolated or vulnerable individuals there may be even more challenges which require even more institutional mechanisms to provide educational and pastoral support for group members/communities, such as the role that Crisis played in the Protohome project. There will thus be different constellations of public, private and third sector actors for different projects and at different stages. Yet working effectively with them, and retaining control of a project, may be an on-going challenge for practitioners/groups. Thus, as I highlight in this chapter, it is the *nature* of the relationship/constellation that is important - on whose terms this takes place.

In this chapter, through the lens of the two studies, I pay particular attention to the role of the local state in participatory housing. The local, as opposed to the national state is focused on not only because this was the uppermost scale that we interacted with in the Protohome project, but also because I believe that in attempting to enact small-scale participatory housing projects this is the level of governance that is most important, when considering what resources (for example land, finance, support routes) may need to be accessed (Chatterton, 2015). It also offers a manageable scale in which to think through housing alternatives.

However, this chapter puts forward a theoretical and methodological grounding for considering how participatory housing practitioners might work both *with* and *against* the local state at the same time, harnessing its knowledge, power and influence (as it still, in a threadbare way, exists), to *work* its ambiguities and contradictions in order to bring forth new housing realities. It thus aims to set an agenda for participatory housing, and whilst this agenda is grounded in the UK housing and political context, as a framework, it is open enough to also move beyond this context.

In doing so, I analyse how Co-PLAN politically and methodologically positioned themselves in Bathore's participatory upgrading programme, and how they opened up what I term a *space of negotiation* between themselves, the local community and the municipality. The *space of negotiation* is not a physical space but a mutual relationship, a space of collaboration and understanding between diverse groups. Opening up the *space of negotiation* was key to enable change in Bathore, to both pragmatically get physical infrastructural works done in the neighbourhood as well as for the wider development of democracy locally. However, the *space of negotiation* is not without tensions. Because it is an ever-shifting intermediary position it is also tenuous and often agonistic. Drawing on Chantal Mouffe (2000; 1992) and Markus Miessen's (2010) work on agonistic pluralism and participation, as well as Edgar Pieterse's (2008) more pragmatic approach to 'working with and against' the state, I propose the *space of negotiation* as a plural space, one that pushes and pulls in different directions at different times and with different motivations. This is a cross-political space, which switches alliances as and when needed. It is sometimes a space of mediation and sometimes a space of agonism; it is sometimes exercised through an insider and sometimes through an outsider; it is sometimes loud and brazen and sometimes quiet and discreet. Importantly, it is both institutionally defined, as well as being defined by the social body (in

this case by the participatory housing practitioner/group). And because both of these agents are in constant flux, the *space of negotiation* is so too.

But as well as a governing arrangement, the *space of negotiation* can be used to foreground and create a space to enhance civic rights by generating new opportunities for institutional infiltration by politically marginalised groups and communities, opening up routes for them to access and 'speak with' and 'to' institutional power and make claims on resources, services and/or space. In this sense the *space of negotiation* allows participatory housing practitioners/groups to harness some of the state's power.

Once the *space of negotiation* is defined then certain practices or *tactics* can be performed through it. However these *tactics* are different to those that emerge through *induced* and *catalytic agency* which I discussed in Chapter 3, because they operate through, and are founded upon specific institutional and organisational arrangements instead of, for example, micro practices of 'making do'. Whilst in Chapter 3 I drew on the work of De Certeau (1980 [2011]), the tactics I describe here are different to his conceptualisation. For De Certeau tactics are formed through an imposed terrain and react according to that terrain, whereas the *space of negotiation* becomes the terrain from which to exercise the tactics. Because the *space of negotiation,* and therefore the tactics that arise from it, are part defined by institutional arrangements, it is important to first 'know the state', by undertaking a fine grained analysis of the inner workings of it and the departments and actors needed to help bring forth participatory housing projects.

The first section of this chapter examines the risks and difficulties involved in working alongside institutional partners, particularly in a period of austerity when time, money, knowledge and capacity may be lacking within local government. I emphasise that initiating housing alternatives that might be

riskier, slower, and provide less units of housing than the 'tried and tested' routes that local authorities usually take, might make this process even more difficult. Furthermore, diverging value systems between local authorities and participatory housing groups may also prove a difficult hurdle.

I then highlight a set of tensions that may emerge from this context for participatory housing groups. I focus particularly on the dangers of state co-option and coercion. I analyse these two forms of power because when groups move into the confines of state structures (however tenuous this relationship is), often values and processes are co-opted (Pieterse, 2008). As an example of this I examine how housing associations were once radical, locally based forms of mutualism which, once they become national, state funded and regulated bodies, lost their autonomy and many of their original values. I also note that the hierarchical, often bureaucratic and slow working processes of the local state may be at odds with a more horizontal and reflexive approach of participatory housing groups.

Next, and in anticipation of my discussion of the *space of negotiation*, I conceptualise the state as a *network of social relations*, instead of just an *institution (*Mitchell et al., 1979*)*. Conceptualising it as such grounds the state in the here and now, within specific actors and departments, and thus challenges the view of the state as an *abstract system* (Mitchell, 1991; 1990). This, I believe, opens more opportunities for infiltration, subversion as well as for creating the *space of negotiation*. I then discuss how participatory housing groups might work with the state and capitalise on their power, knowledge and influence through the *space of negotiation*. I theoretically ground this discussion in the work of Chantal Mouffe and her concept of *agonistic pluralism*, highlighting how a part collaborative, part conflictual model of negotiation prevents the *space of negotiation* from becoming depoliticised and uncritical.

Following this, I examine how Co-PLAN opened up and utilised a *space of negotiation* between the community and the local authority. I examine the tactics they employed to work across different scales of governance, such as media campaigns, public forums and election debates, which not only brought the voice of Bathore's residents to the fore but also brought the issue of informality and the question of formalisation versus demolition onto the mainstream political agenda. I examine how, through operating via a plural political position, Co-PLAN opened up more opportunities to infiltrate positions of power both locally and nationally. But as I highlight, this space is not always so advantageous, as the term suggests, it is always a negotiation, and sometimes compromises are made, as I stated above. However, the nature and depth of these compromises will be contextually dependent upon institutional configuration, as well as the strength and capacity of the participatory housing practitioner or group in relation to the state - for example the depth of its knowledge and understanding about the institutional and operational configurations of the state, the power relations present between different state departments and the tactics utilised.

The last section of the chapter analyses what might be learnt from Co-PLAN's *space of negotiation* for participatory housing in the UK. Drawing on the work of Miessen (2010) and Pieterse (2008) I examine how political pluralism, (switching between political alliances and groups, as well between different tactics at different moments of negotiation), may offer an opportunity to infiltrate the local state apparatus. Using their work I propose a methodological framework for working both with and against local authorities by examining how particular *tactics* may operate through the *space of negotiation* by participatory housing practitioners/groups. These tactics include *evasion, ambiguity*, *subversion* and *co-option* and are all tactics that the state uses. For example the state often evades the people, subverts meaning or co-opts vision

or values. Yet importantly, here I propose to use these strategies against the state. However, as I stated above, this requires understanding the mechanisms through which the state operates, drawing attention to the different arms of it and how they interact, work or don't work, thus I highlight the importance of *knowing* the state. Lastly, I analyse how, through public events and advocacy, the Protohome project was able to overcome a politics of *invisibility* through a politics of *visibility*.

6.2 'Working With': Tensions and Difficulties

There are inevitably dangers in working with the state and/or other institutions of power/influence in participatory housing projects. Ethics, values and processes might be compromised, whilst particularly in an austerity context, as in the UK, 'working with' may be even more riddled with dilemmas and difficulties. In this section I examine these tensions through the lens of the current UK urban development context, but these difficulties are easily translatable to other contexts.

First I examine how, in a period of austerity, when funding, knowledge and capacity within local government is lacking, there are limits to what is deemed 'possible' in housing development. As such, more creative, collaborative and participatory housing options may be more difficult to initiate or gain support for, in favour of the mainstream, 'tried and tested' routes to housing development, that may be quicker, easier and require less specialised support. Second I examine some of the tensions that may arise when working with local authorities. I focus particularly on modes of working that may be at odds with participatory housing groups, for instance, diverging value systems, hierarchical working methods and the risk of co-option *into* these processes, as well as co-option *of* the ethical cause of participatory housing, and the resultant loss of autonomy that may occur.

6.2.1 The politics of the possible

Since the 1970s there has been a growing influence of the private sector in urban development processes and in policy (MacLeod and Jones, 2011). This has been exacerbated within a context of scarcity (Raco, 2013; Raco et al., 2016), and particularly, as I stated in Chapter 2, in anticipation of 2020, when councils are expected to be fully self-funded through retaining 100 per cent of

business rates, increasing council tax and taking advantage of the New Homes Bonus[9] (DCLG, 2016). However, the ability to collect taxes locally has vast geographical differences. In the north-east there are lower incomes, lower house prices and higher welfare dependency thus a lower council tax base. Furthermore, the stock of businesses in the north-east is relatively low and concessions are often made locally to support businesses, such as small business rates relief and empty premises relief which effects how much business rate income can be collected (Association of North East Councils, 2014: 19). As a result, councils are desperately seeking outside investment into the fabric of the city to keep the wheel of capital spinning. And so they welcome foreign investment, volume house-builders and their identikit estates, they set up development companies to build homes for sale (Barnes, 2016) (in order to take advantage of the New Homes Bonus), they market the city's assets at MIPIM expos[10] and sign 'secret deals' with developers, the terms of which cannot be seen due to confidentiality clauses (Raco et al., 2016). Seeking private development seems to be the only route to keep the city out of the red and to keep funding statutory services and responsibilities. Furthermore, governments, both national and local, are forced to act more and more like private businesses, speaking the language of aspiration, investment, efficiency and economic gain (Crouch, 2004). This is the false choice of contemporary urban politics (Slater, 2014).

As development is increasingly channelled and organised through private actors many commentators have suggested that urban development processes

[9] Under the New Homes Bonus the government matches the council tax raised from new homes for the first six years.

[10] MIPIM is a global real estate and networking festival for investors, developers and politicians. It showcases property development opportunities globally and is a way for politicians and city councils to promote foreign investment in their cities. In March 2017 Newcastle City Council attended MIPIM in Cannes, to "showcase our property developments and unique investment opportunities" (http://www.newcastleatmipim.co.uk/). Critics state that it is an arena of secret deals and public land grabs (Chakrabortty, 2014; Minton, 2015).

are becoming increasingly de-politicised (MacLeod and Jones, 2011; Raco et al., 2016). Swyngedouw (2005) terms this 'Governance-beyond-the-state'; for Rancière (2005) it is 'the scandal of democracy'; for Crouch (2004) it is 'post-democracy'. Crouch (2004: 4) states that behind the 'spectacle' of representative democracy, politics is increasingly shaped by private interaction between governments and business elites. In this 'post-democratic' consensus, the 'proper' politics of the councillor-neighbourhood relationship is jeopardised, replaced by a form of expert urban administration which incorporates developers, housing associations, large scale house-builders, and finally, local authorities. As a result there are now multiple centres of power (and therefore multiple layers of governmentality) emerging from multilateral agencies, the private and the third sector which not only contribute to the fragmentation of the state at a national and local level, but also take advantage of this fragmentation (Forrest and Murie, 2014; Raco, 2013), as I stated in Chapter 3 with regards to the 'capturing' of the welfare state by private capital.

As a result there is a certain loss of confidence in the local state and the role that they once held. In an interview, a senior surveyor at Newcastle City Council stated that, "the council can't do everything by themselves, we need bring in other people to actually enable things to come forward". When I asked whether this was to do with financial capacity, they replied,

> "It's a number of things isn't it? So it's… well it's the actual development capability. So… we don't have that anymore. It's completely different in terms of architects teams and delivery teams and so on… So it's always looking at… partnership working. You know everybody has a different element that they can make happen. So we can put in the land. A developer can bring in development finance from private borrowings, but if we can control how that happens in a way that fits with the wider master plan then

> that's kind of the approach, and as I say we just don't have the resources… to build houses anymore".

This statement hints at the large-scale redundancies in Newcastle City Council and new time pressures on officers. Since 2010 the Council has had to shed one third of its employees (Newcastle City Council, 2016), with many of the more 'creative thinkers' having left (Interview with a housing officer at Newcastle City Council). In an interview a housing officer said, "staff resource in house [is]… still an issue from Newcastle Council's point of view. The amount of time you can spend on it in terms of getting your gains at the end of the day".

Crouch (2004) states that one major consequence of the change in the role and nature of the local state is that, for officers, there is a loss of confidence in their abilities. This results in downplaying their knowledge and skills - believing that the private sector is more efficient and skilled than themselves:

> "Eventually this becomes self-justifying. As more and more state functions are sub-contracted to the private sector, so the state begins to lose competence to do things which once it managed very well. Gradually it even loses touch with the knowledge necessary to understand certain activities. It is therefore forced to sub-contract further and buy consultancy services to tell it how to do its own job. Government becomes a kind of institutional idiot, its every ill-informed move being anticipated in advance and therefore discounted by smart market actors. From this follows the core policy recommendation of contemporary economic orthodoxy: the state had best do nothing at all, beyond guaranteeing the freedom of the markets" (2004: 41).

So in housing and beyond, local authorities now act as enablers rather than providers, relying on the purchase of services from the private and the voluntary sector (Davis Smith et al., 1995). The role of the professional planner has thus transformed hugely from the account that I offered through the work of Jane Jacobs (1961 [1992]) and Richard Sennett (2006; 1970) in Chapter 5. Instead of having the power to plan and rebuild whole swathes of cities their influence in an austerity context has been vastly reduced.

In this climate, where waves of privatisation and deregulation have eroded the scope and scale of the state, housing alternatives may be deemed unworkable, unrealistic in the current financial climate. Raco et al. (2016) draw on Rancière's concept of the 'politics of the possible' – highlighting that not only the local state, but also the public, have become 'realists'. Decreased capacity in local government has resulted in the inability to spend time to learn about new housing approaches, and to think differently about housing norms. This is one of the reasons why housing alternatives are so difficult to bring into being. In a context of austerity and government-legitimated 'housing crisis' (which is posited predominantly as a problem of housing numbers), when faced with a project that will provide 300 homes (and more New Homes Bonus) through a volume house-builder as opposed to 30 homes through a community group, local authorities will overwhelmingly choose to offer time and support to the larger scheme, using the 'tried and tested' methods that they are familiar with, as opposed to the seemingly 'riskier' option of community led housing (Interview with the Head of Housing, Newcastle City Council). Furthermore, commercial actors often have more political sway, financial and organisational capacity (Wainwright, 2015). And so the 'politics of the possible' does not exist in quite the same way as it used to. Whilst it is still possible to undertake certain types of interventions, and the Protohome project is evidence of this, many of these housing projects are small scale or one-offs, which may be difficult to replicate (Gooding and Johnston, 2015). Even the Head of Housing at

Newcastle City Council stated in an interview that because of the power and influence of large-scale house-builders and the important role they play in the job market, councils may be reluctant to look to housing alternatives.

Thus, whilst it has always been relatively difficult to work with local authorities, because of time and money pressures, it may now be even more difficult for small community led housing groups to initiate projects (Fitzmaurice, 2014). During the Protohome project we found it difficult to access mere *temporary* use of council owned land because of a lengthy and complicated process of acquiring permissions and a licence. Visiting potential sites around the Ouseburn area of Newcastle with a housing officer, they *only* showed me sites *not* owned by the council. Even the officer recognised that it was easier to engage with private landowners as opposed to the council. This small recollection speaks volumes about the often lengthy processes of trying to acquire land (even for temporary use) through the council, but this is only one small narrative in a much wider story of this research, which, over the past three years, has encompassed many dead ends, re-routes, and of course, wasted time, attempting to get participatory housing projects off the ground, negotiating land and support routes with housing associations, the local authority, land owners and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). It is an exhausting process, and because it is embedded in a context of less money, less time and less possibilities (often on the side of the local authority) it can often feel like there is not a lot of room left for more creative, participatory and innovative approaches to housing that attempt to foreground learning and capacity building.

6.2.2 Value

Differing value structures between participatory housing groups and local authorities may also create difficulties in initiating and carrying out projects.

Because councils are faced with financial capacity issues, they are selling off huge amounts of land and assets (mostly to commercial actors, but sometimes to community groups) and this has highlighted some potential tensions and ambivalences when it comes to notions of 'value', as I highlight in the conversation below, between a senior surveyor and a housing officer. Gaining economic (as opposed to social) value is vital for the council in the current climate (Chatterton, 2015), yet whilst many council officers speak the language of capital, they don't all necessarily subscribe to this logic in its entirety. There is a certain sense that they have been forced into this mentality through austerity. This is an important tension to remember, because it highlights an ambiguity, a transgression, within the local authority, and therefore a space in which to imagine new housing realities.

In a conversation between a housing officer and a senior surveyor at Newcastle City Council different value structures and attitudes were discussed:

> Senior surveyor: "Sometimes… [a housing officer] might have a site and [they] might go 'Oo, this would be great for this', and we would be like, 'Oo, do you know how much we could get for that?' You know, you know, but obviously everybody's got different priorities."
>
> Housing officer: "Or even if there is an interest in something, like you say, it might not always be possible to earmark [the site] for something in particular and unless there's a clear gain in terms of affordable housing and it meets specific targets, say for the Fairer Housing Unit, then you would consider it 'less than best'… Because the main driver is to bring the budgets in."
>
> Senior surveyor: "From a property point of view we try not to sell anything at 'less than best'… But what is less than best? What is less

than best? You know… it's not always a monetary value, it's… it's… you know, council priorities."

Housing Officer: "… get the social benefits as well."

…

Housing Officer: "That's something that we're always discussing. There's the need to make money from one point of view and we also need to meet certain aims so there needs to be sufficient balance so that if we're not getting best value we're getting something that's valuable in another way… it's getting wider social gains out of it."

This conversation highlights that there are various tensions between different arms of the local state which might be between asset management, regeneration, social services, housing or homeless services, each of which might be pulling in different directions. Different departments don't always co-operate well or have the same priorities – thus councils often operate in contradictory ways (a point I return to below when examining how local authorities might be 'infiltrated' and these tensions harnessed for the benefit of participatory housing groups). In the above interaction, the surveyor from property services needs to bring in capital from selling land and assets, particularly in an austerity context when they have disposal targets to adhere to. Yet conversely the housing department has a priority to build more housing of all tenures, as well as to reduce the social housing waiting list. And so different priorities between departments can create internal power interplays within local authorities. Inevitably this has always occurred in urban development issues, however this is exacerbated through austerity measures,

and a need, 'to bring the budgets in'. And so often economic value, as opposed to social value, becomes the entry point for new developments.

However officers aren't always fully confident about this approach to 'bringing the budgets in', there is still a hesitancy to make cuts and sell assets within local authorities. There is a still an institutional memory of what went before, and these flickers, these small recollections are important, because they suggest breaks, they suggest transgressions and hope, as this quote from the surveyor highlights: "We've been given a… a target that we have to reach by March 2017 to bridge the funding gap due to budget cuts for capital programmes. It is a corporate priority. A lot of people see it as selling off the family silver but it, it's got to be done…".

This implies that whilst the *space of negotiation* is context specific, certain contexts can be more or less catalytic for producing and retaining this relationship. Inevitably in a period of austerity, of funding cuts and local authority redundancies, as well as the longer term shifts in urban governance arrangements, as I highlighted above through the work of Colin Crouch (2004), opening up the *space of negotiation* may be more challenging, it may also require different tools and different levels of engagement, particularly when faced with over-stretched council officers and time pressures. For practitioners and groups it may mean being more persistent, more present and at times more patient. I analyse this in further detail in the latter sections of this chapter.

6.2.3 Coercion, co-option and hierarchy

There is inevitably a risk for participatory housing groups needing to work with local authorities in order to access land, finance and support of getting co-opted into these value structures, as well as their hierarchical ways of working. These structures and processes may be at odds with the participatory ethics I

outlined in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the state and other actors/stakeholders may act in coercive ways – offering funding or resources in return for gains in other areas, whether this be publicity or wider business interests. And many community led projects can be prone to co-option by the state or other institutions/agencies because of financial constraints and dependencies (Pieterse, 2008: 100).

As I stated in Chapter 5 when discussing group power relations, acts of authority can be positive or negative. In their negative form they can lead to what Allen (2003: 121) terms 'coercive conditionality' - the ability to regulate conduct through the threat of negative sanctions. This is very much bound up in the state-citizen social contract, as I discussed in Chapter 3, but we can also see this at play in Albania's relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank post-Communism, when they received loans on the condition that they would put structural adjustment policies into place, as I stated in Chapter 2 (see Larmour, 2002; Stokke, 2013 on how coercive conditionality operates through international aid, debt relief and loans). However, in the case of new housing developments, when participatory housing groups might need access to certain resources, and where priorities between groups and institutions/agencies are not shared, coercive conditionality could be used as a bargaining tool (Mosley et al., 1991), which, as Allen states, can lead to the manipulation of an agenda, process or values – with the power firmly in the state's hands. Furthermore, it may also induce a sense of obedience in the participatory housing group.

Yet, conversely, Allen also highlights that 'inducement' is coercion's *positive counterpart*. Inducement occurs when people are won over to a different way of doing something by an institutional power, which may be for the group's overall benefit (2003: 101). So we can also see how, through 'inducement', learning can occur *between* institutions and groups (see Chatterton's (2015)

discussion of a co-housing project which manages to collaborate, as well as learn from, the local authority).

Beyond coercion through dependency, there is a long history of the state integrating groups, collectives and organisations which previously operated (often happily) on the margins of the state, into the confines of state structures and *co-opting* their values and processes. This happened to the friendly societies and mutual aid organisations, which got assimilated into the welfare state in the mid twentieth century, diluting their radical values and political ideals. More recently, we can see this shift within housing associations which began as local philanthropic organisations in the early years of the twentieth century, pre-dating the emergence of council housing (Malpass, 1998), yet from the 1970s they started to swell in size, with many merging due to competition for funding. Now, housing associations are no longer small, or local (Glynn, 2009). Furthermore, because of heavy regulation by, and reliance on funding from the HCA, they are increasingly unlikely to lobby government. This prompted Laws to state that their "progressive potential is constrained by the ambiguities and contradictions around non-for profit activities as well as a need to fit into the regulations of the state and this has stifled some more progressive activity and reform politics of the third sector" (1992: 741). Ling calls organisations that move easily and contentedly into the boundaries of the state "compliant collaborators" (2000: 90), which are not willing to 'rock the boat' for the sake of funding and access to resources or influence.

However, if well placed and politicised, and not just an agent of the state, the third sector can still be a force for change. As I highlighted in Chapter 3, May and Cloke examine how third sector organisations and charities actively attempt to resist state policy and often challenge it stating that,

> "Critically, just as the agency of homeless people themselves helps to shape the contours of the homeless city, so it is very often the agency of individual staff and volunteers who help create spaces of care for homeless people within a rapidly neoliberalising homeless service system" (2013: 907).

They discuss the 'messy middleground' – understanding how homeless services might embody resistance, rather than co-option by an increasingly neoliberal welfare system (see also Cloke et al., 2010).

However, the co-option of third sector organisations, as I described above, is real, and this may well happen to constituted participatory housing groups as they work with institutions, whether these be charities, like Crisis, for learning and pastoral support for participants, or development partners, such as housing associations, commercial developers or local authorities, in order to acquire finance, land, support and legitimacy. As a result, participatory housing groups might get co-opted into their processes and values which may include speeding up processes that might need more time for deliberation, using standardised design systems that may not foreground learning or be environmentally-friendly, getting funding from non-ethical sources, becoming a mouthpiece for certain institutional mentalities, being silenced and becoming depoliticised, and thus the overall cause with regards to housing justice being eclipsed. Furthermore, the often slow and bureaucratic working practices of councils may be at odds with the fast and responsive methods of participatory housing groups (Chatterton, 2015). Pieterse writes that, "grassroots projects can be invaluable sites of experimentation with alternative ways of doing development. State bureaucracies tend to be rigid, hierarchical and conformist institutions. Little room is left for creativity, learning and innovation" (2008: 99). Thus local authorities can be reactive rather than proactive, operating as a rational-legal authority as opposed to an enabling one (Chatterton, 2015: 46).

Furthermore, the hierarchical structures, the vertical chains of command, and the delineation of, and often lack of communication between, different council departments (as we can see in the above conversation) may also be at odds with the horizontal structures, participatory methods and ethical approaches of participatory housing groups.

During the Protohome project, we took a reflexive approach to the process – one that highlighted opportunities for learning and capacity building, we used a collective decision making framework, which tried to create a space for questioning, discussion and dissensus, we worked slowly, building relationships, confidence and social networks, creating a safe space to have serious as well as frivolous conversation into life trajectories, we made time for mistakes, re-routes and dead ends, we took note of what happened between the decision making and the building, we foregrounded creative approaches (spending three weeks making a huge sign from old joints to go on the top of the building and spray painting designs on t-shirts), we allowed new people to come in and out of the project, which meant that introductions to the project were cyclical. These activities and modes of working may not be seen as being absolutely integral to getting a building built efficiently and there are inherent difficulties in this more 'open' methodology, whereby the boundaries of the project changed whilst it was in motion. However, working intuitively and as non-hierarchically as possible, as I have stated throughout this thesis, was at the centre of a wider aim to decentre knowledge production and to crack open the dichotomy between the 'professional architect/builder' and the 'amateur user'. This isn't to say that more institutionally defined approaches are devoid of learning, sociality, laughter and fun, but instead participatory approaches *actively make space* for these within their structures and processes.

Therefore the question here is how to work with certain agencies or institutions of economic or political power whilst also retaining autonomy and progressive,

participatory value structures. In the latter part of this chapter I discuss how institutional processes and methods can be adapted and/or subverted through processes of negotiation and *tactics*.

6.3 The State as Social Relation

In the remainder of the chapter I move beyond a discussion of the potential tensions that may arise when working with the state and examine methods of establishing a working relationship with the local state. However, before I examine processes and methods, I must first offer clarity on how I am conceptualising the state. Here I conceptualise the state not only as an institution, but also as a *set of social relations* (Mitchell et al., 1979). Conceiving of the state as such opens up possibilities for intercepting, influencing and potentially diverting it. Yet, as I state later on in the chapter, this also means that housing practitioners must also *know* the state and the various arms and actors that make it up.

The anarchist Gustav Landauer was the first to conceptualise the state as a set of social relations (Lynteris, 2013), stating in 1910 that,

> "One can throw away a chair and destroy a pane of glass; but those are idle talkers and credulous idolaters of words who regard the state as such a thing or as a fetish that one can smash in order to destroy it. The state is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another… We are the state, and we shall continue to be the state until we have created the institutions that form a real community and society of men" (quoted in Lynteris, 2013: 2).

So, for Landauer, the state is not *out there*, not something *external* to us, but *in here*, *within* the *polis.* As opposed to seeing the state as an idea, a kind of transcendental power from above (Abrams, 1988), he noted that we actively perform the state, we constantly reproduce it as citizens. If we mystify the state,

if we reproduce what Lukacs (1971) calls the 'phantom objectivity' of the state and what Lynteris (2013) terms the 'state as fetish', whereby the state is an illusion which rules over, controls and governs people, then the submission that the state requires from its citizens can continue (Lynteris, 2013: 2). Lynteris writes that, "the phantasmagoria of the doubly reified state is precisely what allows social actors to turn a blind eye to their own involvement and complicity in performing and reproducing the state, in their everyday lives" (2013: 3). In this way the state actually *captures* social relations (Mitchell, 1991; 1990). Conversely, for Landauer, if we recognise the state as a set of social relations, as relationships between people, then we have more chance of destroying it, by behaving differently, by taking different actions, by co-operating. This conceptualisation of the state was at the root of Landauer's belief in mutual aid as opposed to state organised welfare.

There is a certain materiality to Landauer's idea of the state as social relation which is rooted in the performance of it through concrete everyday actions, as well as being an external agent whose weight of decision lies fundamentally out with everyday life. In a similar vein, Painter (2006) focuses on the mundane, everyday practices that give rise to 'state effects', what he calls the 'prosaic manifestations' of state processes - the ways in which the state reaches into the social organism and infiltrates social relations (see also Hirsch, 1983: 79). Paying attention to the small or large acts of governmentality in daily life, as well as the actions of, for example, local authority officers, allows us to understand the state's engrained ways of working and therefore opens up opportunities to intervene into them. Through this attentiveness, Painter highlights a "productive gap between the rule-bound model behaviour ascribed to bureaucratic actors and their actual practices" (2006: 770). Here biopolitics opens up opportunities for subversion.

In conceptualising the state as such, we appreciate that whilst the state rules, punishes, regulates and intervenes (from above), because it is constructed and performed by people, it is also porous, relational, uneven, divided and full of ambiguities (Painter, 2006: 754). As Painter writes, "statization depends on and proceeds through mundane practices undertaken by thousands of individual state officials and citizens, there is considerable scope for what is seen as failure, disruption, and breakdown, as well as qualitative and quantitative social and spatial variation" (2006: 764). In the same sense that Landauer's anarchist sense of the state created opportunities for the destruction of it, Painter's notion of the state also opens up new ways of co-opting, infiltrating and intervening into the state, as I highlight in detail later in this chapter.

However, the degree to which the state can be infiltrated and become an agent of change, a catalyst or an enabler will be different across contexts. Local authorities may have diverse make ups and may take very different approaches to housing and planning matters as priorities and diverse geographies of power and economics play out. In the Protohome project we had a fruitful relationship with the local authority, although understandably there were also some tensions and differences of vision and values, as highlighted above. However they helped us gain access to land and collaborated on a workshop for housing and planning officers about self-build housing. I built a particularly good relationship with one housing officer who became an advocate for the project. This suggests that it is often the *individuals* within a local authority that are important – those that might think differently and challenge the 'tried and tested' methods of working, that may create small 'knots' within wider departments. And although they may be time-pressured, often working outside of their allotted 'paid work' time, replying to emails in evenings and on weekends, walking around potential sites on days off, these small acts highlight that there are officers in local authorities who are tentatively trying to grow their 'knot' in the system (whilst it is also important to remember that individuals may

be *more or less* enthusiastic, helpful or catalytic). And so whilst a large institution in its entirety may be difficult to budge, local authorities are made up of individual actors each of whom, in their roles, have *some* individual agency, and just sometimes they might throw a piece of that agency in your direction. But indeed, it is the quality, nature and terms of the relationship that is vital, as I discuss below with regards to Co-PLAN's co-operation with Bathore's local authority.

6.4 Co-PLAN and the Space of Negotiation

As I stated above, conceptualising the state as a set of social relations opens up new opportunities for infiltrating, co-opting and subverting it. Importantly, understanding that the state is made up of individuals who may be more or less supportive highlights that relationships between participatory housing practitioners and the state can be created, and can lead to positive results. But how is this done in practice? In this section I scrutinise how Co-PLAN pluralistically positioned themselves between the community and formal party politics and created a *space of negotiation*.

As I stated in the Introduction the *space of negotiation* is not a physical space, instead it is a link, a connection, a mutual relationship, a collaboration between diverse groups. It is a plural space that can shift in nature through time and activity, as new actors enter the space and old ones leave, it is thus not without its tensions. Certain tactics are enabled through the *space of negotiation,* as I discuss below. For Co-PLAN it enabled pragmatic actions to be taken, such as building physical infrastructure, as well as creating a space for the development of democracy locally. Because the *space of negotiation* is context dependent, the mechanisms through which it operates will differ. But, regardless, because it depends on relationships between changing actors, this space is not static, but in flux, it moves and shifts, changing according to what resources or support are required at a particular time. It is used to infiltrate the state and takes advantage of the ambiguities and the new opportunities that appear in the inner workings of it. It is shrewd and pragmatic. It is also, as Appadurai states in relation to his concept of the 'politics of the patience', "a politics of accommodation, negotiation and long-term pressure rather than of confrontation or threats of political reprisal" (2001: 29).

Below I examine how this *space of negotiation* was worked practically by Co-PLAN, through the use of various tactics and political and media platforms. I also scrutinise whether any compromises were made in this process – did the *space of negotiation* ever become a *space of negation?* However, I first introduce the theoretical framework through which I am conceptualising the *space of negotiation* – how it relates to ideas of agonistic pluralism, as I introduced in Chapter 5, through the work of Chantal Mouffe (2000; 1992).

6.4.1 Agonistic pluralism

The *space of negotiation,* as I emphasised above, is a plural space, but it is also a space of disagreement and conflict. Whilst Co-PLAN worked across party political borders they were not afraid to challenge them, to offer a conflictual perspective. This conflict came both from Co-PLAN themselves as institutional partners, as well as from the community who made claims and asserted rights towards the local authority. Furthermore, as I stated in Chapter 5, during the Protohome project there were also moments of disagreement, such as the scenario I described between Peter and Nyree. Yet there was a certain honesty in this conflict that eventually brought understanding. It was a learning process, through which we came to *know* each other (and perhaps ourselves), our limits, our struggles, as well as about the levels of communication necessary to work in collaborative partnership. These are therefore valuable tensions, and mutual learning and transformation may actually *require* conflict rather than an illusion of common ground (Driver and Kravatski, 2000). Here I return to the work of Mouffe to theoretically ground my discussion of the *space of negotiation*, as a space of *agonistic pluralism,* of a relationship between adversaries, not enemies, in which dissensus can be pragmatic.

In Chapter 5 I critiqued the work of Habermas (1981) and Healey (1997) and their concept of a radical participatory democracy focused on consensus

building practices as the basis for "inclusionary collaborative strategy-making" (Healey, 1997: 265), whereby a reconciliation of values and an undistorted process of communication based on negotiation and mediation is used as a way to avoid coercion (see also Fischer and Forester, 1993; Innes, 2004). I used Mouffe's work on agonistic pluralism to critique the blind weight given to consensus building in participatory processes. But the idea of consensus is equally problematic within the *space of negotiation* when working with local authorities. Power relations cannot always be dissolved through rational debate, as I highlighted in Chapter 5. Furthermore, by not tending to deeply engrained power inequalities and differences of value, participatory housing practitioners/groups are at risk of co-option and coercion, as I described above. As such, Mouffe writes that, "every consensus exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony, as a stabilisation of power, and that it always entails some form of exclusion" (2000: 104). So often conflict is required to move forward, to understand and to 'know' each other, and so internal debate and criticism can be productive.

Conversely Mouffe (2000; 1992) puts forward an agonistic model of democracy, formed through a radical approach to pluralism. Mouffe notes that a liberal approach to pluralism (the so-called 'Third Way') posits political categories as out-dated, giving way to a "consensus at the centre". She observes that at play within this consensus is a refusal to establish normative positions on political views, which brings forth a neutralisation, a flattening of political assertions, which in itself has created political disaffection, indifference and disillusionment within the *polis*, and a perception of a political deadlock - 'the end of ideology' (Marcil-Lacoste, 1992: 135). And so, "where a conflictual model is often believed to lead to a splintering of society, it is precisely the consensual model that produces just this splintering; only it does so by means of a collective passivity" (Miessen, 2010: 83).

Mouffe's 'agonistic pluralism' doesn't *undermine* conflict, but *brings forth* conflict by emphasising difference and counter-values. At the heart of agonistic pluralism is an understanding about how individuals and communities *are*. As I argued in Chapter 5, communities are not consensual and homogenous, but are founded upon difference and inequality (Mouffe, 1999; Richardson and Connelly, 2005) - there is a "multiplicity of social logics" (Mouffe, 1992: 14), an everyday pluralism within associational life. I found this when I unearthed the history of Co-PLAN's upgrading project and the difficulties that the community based organisations had in persuading members of the community to give up land for roads and sewers, and the frictions that stemmed from this in the neighbourhood (see Chapter 5). So if we recognise that the social agent, and therefore the state (which, as I stated above, is also made up of social subjects), is not a unitary subject but is influenced and shaped by many forces and takes on and articulates a number of subject positions, then we understand that consensual participation cannot empirically work in practice all the time. And so for Mouffe, conflict is not just necessary, it is *absolutely central* to social life. Yet this conflict is not between 'enemies' (which would be 'antagonism'), but between 'adversaries' (what Mouffe terms 'agonism'). In a part collaborative, part conflictual relationship, these 'adversaries' share ethical-democratic principles but they disagree on the interpretation of these principles (Mouffe, 2000: 88). So whilst at points consensus is needed, it must be accompanied by dissent (Mouffe, 2000: 113). Thus within a pluralistic community, communitarian principles should be compatible with conflict, division and antagonism (Mouffe, 1992: 12).

It is this sense of *agonistic pluralism* and these spaces of dissensus, that are sometimes confrontational and sometimes amicable, that are shifting and tactical, which are central to my conceptualisation of the *space of negotiation*. This is not formed by any preconceived idea of a 'common good', but instead it is a space/relationship that can cope with *many* logics. But how was this plural,

agonistic *space of negotiation* created by Co-PLAN? I describe this in the following section.

6.4.2 Opening the space of negotiation

As I stated in Chapter 2, the mid 1990s was a politically heightened period in Albania, framed by political infighting, unfulfilled promises, bribes and corruption on all levels of society and politics. A manager of a cultural organisation in Kamëz stated in an interview that, "The corruption is part of the lifestyle. It's a big problem. It has become a culture, it's a way of thinking, it's not good". And in Bathore 'vote bank' politics (Benjamin, 2008) was rife. One resident said, "They have not bought the votes but have come and made promises, but they have done nothing!" At this time everyone was running, making deals to access resources and power. In the previous chapter I quoted Besnik Aliaj, co-founder of Co-PLAN, in which he discusses how they first entered Bathore and began to build relationships of trust with the community. He stated: "So what we tried to do is to say that we are not part of political things here but we are here to start a process for professional reasons". Co-PLAN was thus careful to position itself outside of this systemic chaos and outside of the corruption of formal politics. However this climate also allowed Co-PLAN to operate fairly freely across scalar, social and political boundaries. Furthermore, when Co-PLAN first entered Bathore in the early 1990s, Kamëz was still a commune, not yet a municipality. As a result they played a central role in training members of the local authority, providing expertise, methodological support and initial census data (from Co-PLAN's door-to-door surveys) for this newly emerging political structure. Opening up the *space of negotiation* was vital to create an institutional model of collaborative planning (Healey, 1997), and, in co-founder Dritan Shutina's words, to "develop models how communities and authorities can work together". But furthermore, in realisation that at one point they would have to 'pull out' of the community,

they focused on training community members and the local authority to ensure the long term sustainability of the programme and the cross-scalar relationships, as Shutina stated, "we don't want to substitute the government - that is our fear. We should not do forevers - let them do it themselves".

Instead of aligning with a particular cause or political party Co-PLAN took a plural political position (see my discussion of agonistic pluralism above), working with whomever was in power in the local authority or government at a particular time. For over ten years Co-PLAN worked with four mayors from different parties. This is what Appadurai (2001: 29) terms "politics without parties". Shutina stated:

> "… when the municipality started it was first run by Democrats and we started to work with the Democrat mayor. For whatever reason, in the second term the Socialists won and… the mayor… was very skeptical about us, because for him we were working with the previous mayor… We had some difficult months at the beginning, but then [the new mayor] realised that practically, we were working with 'the mayor' and not with the 'Democrat mayor'… And then after some time he understood that we were not partisan, we were a development organisation and then of course things worked".

And so Co-PLAN was,

> "… keeping a very neutral position politically. We were saying the truth… And this could harm the government or the opposition but this doesn't matter… We were trying to be very professional, and if you stick to this in the short term it creates problems, but in the long term it is investment. But generally it was positive, the co-operation".

Above, Shutina states, Co-PLAN "were not partisan, we were a development organisation", whilst ex-mayor of Kamëz, Agim Cani, stated in an interview: "I helped them a lot because I understood that they weren't corrupt - they weren't doing anything for personal gain and weren't political". These statements could be read as evidence of the depoliticisation of development, the silencing of political values and the readiness to be co-opted into institutional ways of working and into neoliberal worldviews, as I outlined in Chapter 5 (see Berner and Philips, 2005; Cleaver, 1999; Cooke and Kothari, 2006; Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Mohan and Stokke, 2000; Williams, 2004). However this was not quite the case. Co-PLAN were not operating outside of the *political sphere*, instead they were operating outside of the *party political sphere*. They were playing the *politics of non-affiliation*. This was a pragmatic approach to a project which had to achieve certain infrastructural aims (such as providing much needed water, electricity, sewers and roads) over a period of ten years. Because it was a long term project Co-PLAN were aware that a change of political leadership could halt or end the project, and so were careful not to align themselves to a particular party or dogma. However, it must not be forgotten that this political pluralism also emerged through the political climate of the time - the deep dissatisfaction with formal party politics. Therefore it may not have been in Co-PLAN's interests to align themselves with a particular political allegiance. However, although the politics of non-affiliation is pragmatic, it is also fragile. It is a tentative position to sit within - as Shutina stated above, it can end up being 'harmful' to governments or organisations/groups working with them. Furthermore, as I stated above, the *space of negotiation* is context dependent in terms of institutional arrangement and political climate. It is also actor dependent. In Co-PLAN's case the ability to speak across party political boundaries, to be convivial, and to bring different allegiances together were vital. In interviews with all four ex mayors of Kamza, as well as with community members, interviewees spoke about the co-founders

of Co-PLAN as amiable characters, easy to get along with and negotiate with, yet also people who were pragmatic and spoke their minds when needed. Projects of this kind often need certain characters/figures who can mediate, speak across difference, bring people together and persist with a project over a long period of time (Chatterton, 2015). However this is not to say that the *space of negotiation* can only operate within particular climates or contexts or with particular actors, but its make up will change according to these factors.

In working in this manner, Co-PLAN could retain access to certain elements of political power and influence over a long period of time. This ended up being a fairly savvy approach. Yet this did not mean, as Shutina states, that Co-PLAN were blind to power, or were dishonest about their views, in fact he says that they "were saying the truth", even if doing so could harm their project or cause. The role of honesty, I feel, is an important one when working with formal institutions of power, and Co-PLAN's role as *outsiders* seemed to allow them to ask certain, often frank questions about power, institutional objectives, decision-making and democracy without risking their legitimacy - questions which may have been regarded as unacceptable if coming from inside the political system. But this, of course, meant that they had to have certain skills of reason and practical judgement. Yet inevitably this positioning was risky – it was a fine line to walk.

6.4.3 Media campaigns

Within the space of negotiation certain tactics were used by Co-PLAN to obtain resources, influence and knowledge from institutions of power. These tactics were not always co-constitutive of each other, often they operated alone, sometimes they were more tactical in nature, more opportunistic, more manipulative of institutional arrangements, whilst at other times they were quieter and more collaborative.

Here I examine how they made use of media campaigns as a mechanism for learning between the community and institutional actors, as well as to disseminate information about the project and to spread knowledge about participatory urban development methods. These campaigns were both local and national. On a local level, in order to disseminate Bathore's urban plan to the wider community of Kamëz, banners were erected along the main road, whilst within each of Bathore's zones the plan was publically placed. A newsletter for Bathore was published by the residents and was a good opportunity for community members to share opinions and concerns about the project. Co-PLAN also arranged debates and public negotiation platforms during Kamëz's local elections, where Bathore's residents could bring forth their viewpoints and advocate for resources and services, but also to ensure that promises for urban regularisation were made and adhered to. Shutina explained this negotiation platform in an interview:

> "… this community organisation is coming up, saying 'This is what we want in this area', and, interestingly this was used as a negotiation platform during the [local] electoral campaign… There were three… mayoral candidates [and] we organised debates, again in the facilitation mode but also educating the actors in a democracy,… and the communities were coming with their neighbourhood development plan, [saying],… 'This is what we want', 'What are you going to do?' and so on. And I don't know how much it was respected, you know, but at least at the level of interaction there was already [the understanding that the municipality] could not bullshit around".

In this facilitated space there was a chance for people themselves to advocate to politicians, to negotiate with them and to bring forth demands, plans and

ideas for change. These platforms were a vital opportunity for the voice of the community to be heard in a formal (and influential) political space, as well as for wider processes of democracy building to happen in the fledgling local authority. Through platforms like these there may also be an opportunity for the development of *social learning*, as Pieterse writes, which "can socialise uninformed and unrecognised citizens into democratic values such as accountability, transparency, (agonistic) deliberation, inclusivity, review and majority decision making" (2008: 97). Furthermore, power imbalances between state and community may shift through these processes. But also, as I highlight below, these campaigns had wider impacts for particularly informal housing policy in Albania.

We can see this shift occur in Bathore. Eventually some of Bathore's community leaders became local councillors and were given official posts within the local authority. Of course this leads us to question, who is empowered through the *space of negotiation*? Are some voices left silent, are some marginalised? Like Chapter 5's discussion with regards to the role of local leaders, or *kryeplakë* in Bathore's upgrading project, the enhanced role of local leaders in the local authority is inevitably another example of how certain gendered, hierarchical spaces were, and still are, at play in Bathore. Thus the *space of negotiation* may accentuate these hierarchies. However, it is inevitable that in opening up such spaces of co-operation, there will be compromise, it will be messy, not all voices will be heard, as my focus on agonistic participation highlights. But because the *space of negotiation* is always shifting, new actors come into the space and old actors leave. We can only hope that, incrementally, a more inclusive *space of negotiation* is forged through time and politicised practise to break down gendered or classed hierarchies. The other option would be that community members refrain from entering into positions/relationships of institutional power.

So whilst community representation may be more or less equal, these spaces do still have the potential for communities to advocate from a position of power and engage in a democratic political struggle for rights and resources. As a result, Bathore's community came to be seen as *recognised citizens* instead of 'illegals', 'squatters' or 'occupiers'. The voice of the 'Other' has therefore been legitimised, to a certain extent (even if this emerges through forms of community authority). As a result of Co-PLAN's outward facing negotiations with formal institutions of power a political and social learning process occurred in Bathore, as well as a reshaping of institutional-community networks.

On a national level Co-PLAN's media campaigns and annual public debates/urban forums helped to foreground the plight of informal settlements and community-based development approaches within the mainstream political agenda. As Accioly et al. (2004: 10) write, until then, "open debate [on urban development issues] in professional circles… was inexistent in Albanian society". Regressive mentalities which manifested in the use of forceful tactics, like demolition, towards informal settlements were standard within institutional and professional circles, as Aliaj stated:

> "I remember that my colleagues at the university were saying, 'Where are these people? They do not exist, so send in the police and army, soon they will demolish' - so that was the mentality. The problem was there… but for them the problem was not there… So, I mean, politically there was no understanding, resources were not there, priorities were not there and there was not even professional awareness about this… because in the past such developments were not existing".

The open debates that Co-PLAN organised in Tiranë's public sphere helped to challenge these institutional mentalities, which worked to separate the formal from the informal (often victimising the informal in the process), as well as perceptions concerning effective methodologies and practices of 'doing' planning. These sat alongside official visits to Bathore by Albania's national government as well as the President of the World Bank. These visits enabled Co-PLAN to gain legitimacy for the upgrading project, which highlights the importance of high level political support for participatory development/housing projects, as Shutina stated:

> "At that time we were considered like black sheep - I mean, 'These guys are crazy, they are supporting criminals'… It took time, it was not easy,… but then the authorities were convinced to come. The crucial moment was the visit of the World Bank president… this was the turning point politically… it caused a kind of media and political attention. It helped us a lot to come [on]to [the] political agenda… And since then we have been moving from local community projects to local governments trying to build strategies, plans, visions… for the formalisation of informal settlements - regulation and integration of these neighbourhoods.
>
> So the idea was that we put this in a [policy] document and sent it to parliament and started to tackle the issue politically. And because of this, it opened a debate [about whether]… informalisation is an alternative for housing for low income people or [whether we] should demolish it. Now there is no discussion - they say that of course it should be a process of formalisation".

Creating a pragmatic, plural and resilient *space of negotiation* has inevitably enabled the high level political support that Shutina discusses. As a result these public events were precedent setting, eventually leading to a change in

national policy with regards to informal settlements. Co-PLAN managed to help subvert deeply held beliefs about who informal dwellers are, what they do or how they live, offering new accounts of, and new scenarios for, informal settlements. Most importantly these events and debates helped to challenge mentalities about the informal 'subject'. Co-PLAN showed that Bathore's community members are active, can take control and responsibility, can engage in democratic debates and partnerships and importantly, that they have legitimacy. Ultimately this is about a politics of recognition, of visibility in which poor people are able to capture power and acquire and use formal political space (Appadurai, 2001). And interestingly, Co-PLAN achieved this through harnessing the tools (created and enabled through the *space of negotiation*) that feed formal political power – publicity, image making, rhetoric and the media - using this and subverting it to help empower a socially isolated and economically disadvantaged community. Below I discuss in more detail how certain tools, tactics, mechanisms or processes of institutional power can be used and mobilised in the service of participatory forms of housing.

6.4.4 Compromises?

In opting for the politics of partnership, organisations like Co-PLAN take risks. Their causes and ethics may be co-opted by institutional powers, as I highlighted above. Their goals might shift to incorporate those of the wider national state and they may lose their radical 'edge' as they move from the margins to the centre. Now Co-PLAN is a well-known planning organisation, and in 2006 they set up a not-for-profit university, called POLIS, which teaches architecture, urban planning and art and design courses. They frequently undertake state contracts in the field of planning and urban development, however, it seems that they have resisted being co-opted into the state, and instead their negotiation platform is stronger - they are often now in a position to forge the agenda for urban planning in a national policy context. In an

interview I asked Besnik Aliaj whether he thought their participatory principles had been compromised as a result of their shift from the margins to the centre. He stated that,

> "Now the organisation of Co-PLAN… has shifted from grassroots based projects to more consultancy and strateg[ic] projects - bigger scale. But this [has been] done because this is the only [planning] institute in the country and there is a real need [for this]… Of course we might keep a division, a component of the organisation, focused on this [participatory] experience. We try and do it indirectly and not in a formalised way… But it's true that the organisation has shifted… but we cannot deny [an organisation] the right to grow… it's like a normal life cycle. What is smart is [that we] make sure that young staff, young people, continue in [a participatory] way. I believe that through POLIS we are doing this… [going] to local communities, local authorities and work[ing] with these projects. So we do it in a more institutional way now, we don't need to do it in… [a] guerrilla [way] as before".

So whilst Co-PLAN has progressively scaled up its activities, and moved into the field of education, they still manage to retain participatory methodologies and act as an effective interface between communities and authorities. Furthermore, as I witnessed when I went with them to community planning workshops during the course of this research, they are still pragmatic catalysts (see my discussion of this in Chapter 2). But also, as Aliaj states above, Co-PLAN, and also POLIS, now carry out these processes from a position of legitimacy, because they have experience and because they are trusted, and so whilst their approach may be more 'institutional' and less 'guerrilla' or 'DIY', they have retained many of their original aims and ethics.

However, when collaborating with institutions of power through the *space of negotiation* comprise, to some extent, is a reality, whether this eventually leads to more positive or more negative results for participatory housing groups. Compromise is part of a pragmatic and collaborative process, and indeed perhaps one of the reasons why Co-PLAN *are* pragmatic is *because* they compromise, so whilst there is always a need for participatory housing groups to be awake to compromise, it is not always negative, but can be catalyst for wider gains or opportunities in the future.

6.4.5 Learning from?

Inevitably the political space that Co-PLAN operated within in the mid 1990s was very different to that of the present day. Whilst they previously worked in a 'guerrilla-like' fashion, in the cracks of the system, at that time the system was *full of cracks*, *gaping open with cracks*, as one resident stated in an interview, "Mostly there was no government at all. It was a government but mostly just a name. They could not function correctly". Perhaps Co-PLAN's position was easier to negotiate within this context, when everything in Albania was in flux? Perhaps access to, and control over, local government was easier because democratic structures were in a fledgling state, and because Co-PLAN possessed certain knowledges, skills and data, which the local state required? Perhaps if there had been well established political structures with deeply embedded working practices then this would have been more difficult? Furthermore, if the political conditions in which Co-PLAN operated (and perhaps took advantage of) were so specific, then how can this example offer a method of working both with and against the state now, in the UK, in the field of participatory housing?

Before I delve into this question, it must be remembered, as I stated in Chapter 2, that I am thinking and working *between* specificity and generalisability, and it

is the overall approach that I am examining here – Co-PLAN's pluralistic positioning, their harnessing (and twisting) of institutional structures and processes, how they worked 'with' at the same time as opposing and transforming, how they used platforms to challenge mentalities and offer a site for the poor to represent themselves and build long-term political capabilities and connections to formal institutions of power.

6.5 Proposing a Space of Negotiation for Participatory Housing

Although Co-PLAN worked within the field of collaborative planning, as influenced by practices of collaborative planning (Healey, 1997), and positioned themselves as mediators, there were aspects of their work that were more conflictual, both in terms of their relationship with the local authority and how they managed conflict/power differences within the community. Perhaps this reflected the social and political climate of Albania at the time – being more overtly confrontational, where they could force themselves into communication and co-operation with institutions of power whilst at the same time challenge and provoke these institutions, as Mouffe (2000; 1992) suggests in her approach to agonistic pluralism.

Regardless, an analysis of Co-PLAN offers a number of practical and theoretical tools to help consider relationships between communities and local authorities. In this section I consider how these methods might be practically employed within participatory housing in the UK, whilst recognising that the state operates very differently across the two studies. In doing so I draw on the work of the architect Markus Miessen (2010), who has been heavily influenced by Mouffe. Yet in recognition that their work lacks a focus on local institutional complexity, and they thus under-theorise the practical implications of their proposals, I move beyond their work and discuss how pluralism and the *space of negotiation* might be *practiced*, through some reflections from the Protohome project, as well as through the concepts of *ambiguity*, *subversion*, *co-option* and *evasion* – through which opportunities for infiltration into state structures may be harnessed.

6.5.1 Working with and against

Miessen (2010) proposes micro-political participation in the production of space through what he terms 'critical spatial practice' (see also Rendell, 2009). In recognising that space is bound up with multi-scalar power relations, and that the work of a spatial practitioner, whether this be an architect, builder, designer, planner or artist, is full of contradictions, blind spots and dead ends, (particularly when working with, or being co-opted into, the space of capitalist relations), there is no longer a purist approach to the production of urban space – the money is nearly always dirty, the land is nearly always too expensive, the planning process is nearly never democratic enough. Instead of reconciling these relations, shrugging our shoulders at them or actively buying into the false choice, Miessen posits the role of the 'critical spatial practitioner' as a maverick, uninvited outsider, who forces her/himself into existing power relations. This outsider operates on the edges of rules and regulations and uses whatever political influence they can take hold of, whilst at the same time politicising this for their wider cause.

Whilst Miessen (2010: 193) states that the outsider never works 'within' and their role is neither a mediator nor a consensus-builder, I would beg to differ when reflecting on my own experience of being a spatial practitioner during the Protohome project. For me, the role of the critical spatial practitioner, particularly in an austerity context when there is less money, less support, less vision, less time, is as both insider and outsider in relationship to the state and other institutions of power, such as universities and charities, at different points. This role is both as an amateur and a professional, both the person in the suit and the person in the overalls, both the person that uses a pen and that uses a saw. It is thus much more multifaceted, yet more pitted with dangers than Miessen leads us to believe.

Furthermore, in Co-PLAN's approach, I can also see the associational power that can be formed through infiltrating and twisting modes of institutional power - *using* these mechanisms and the policy that they generate. In *The Nightmare of Participation* Miessen writes that instead of "doing local community work through Section 106 agreements" (2010: 56) critical spatial practitioners should open up micro-politics by inserting friction. But why can't friction be inserted into formal institutions of power and the mechanisms they employ (such as Section 106 requirements)? Why can't these mechanisms be used to generate new forms of value, or to present alternative ways of recreating urban space, as a certain pragmatic approach to making change happen, to 'getting things done'? If we can't access assets and support either through militant or party political means, then surely the last option is to try and work with and against at the same time? But not as individual egos, but as collectives of people that have the heart of the matter (such as housing crisis or homelessness) at the core of their campaign - groups that take up a targeted position working with the state to access land, finance and support – pragmatically trying to generate alternative operative frameworks. For Miessen this might be seen as accommodation, and indeed it may often verge on the margins of this, the cause may get co-opted because it may be difficult to perceive when to be 'inside' and when to be 'outside' the system (Said, 1993). But perhaps actively working *with* institutions of power in an assertive manner, may also allow the outside practitioner to question certain embedded modes of working, which may be difficult for those individuals who are entangled within the political (and social) relations of an institution.

Inevitably, working in opposition to, and in co-operation with, the state is a difficult balancing act. In *City Futures* (2008), Edgar Pieterse proposes an alternative urban development framework of working with, and also in opposition to, the state to confront the framing conditions of poverty. This means appreciating the structural effects of the various modalities of state

power without relinquishing the importance of agency. He states that this "involves straddling diverse spatial scales and territorial-administrative jurisdictions; criss-crossing the political and official divide; deal-making with progressive and conservative political parties; and playing off one level of government against another" (2008: 117). This suggests that there are formal and informal approaches to decision making within the state, and both avenues must be harnessed - as Healey states, "the visible power of formal government decision-making arenas is always complemented by the informal and less visible ways in which power and influence is mobilised" (1997: 59). Yet Pieterse also writes,

> "… of significance in this approach is not pitting the solution proposed by the poor against the state programme, or lobbying directly for policy change, but rather the seeking of 'shifts' in institutional arrangements which determine the way policy translates into action" (2008: 116).

He writes that these 'shifts' are bound to change policy in the end. So this is about infiltration - an incremental approach to change, instead of storming the corridors of power, what Critchley calls, "dirty, detailed, local, practical and largely unthrilling work" (2007: 132). But at points there will be ruptures in the status quo, whether these are small victories (such as accessing land) or large shifts (such as housing policy change).

6.5.2 Ambiguity, co-option, subversion, evasion

The realisation of this mode of working is vital for participatory housing which requires certain support structures. But how might this realisation occur? Using Co-PLAN's process as a foundation, I now closely examine how certain *tactics* (*ambiguity*, *subversion*, *co-option* and *evasion*) might operate within the *space*

of negotiation to co-opt resources and power from the state in order to advocate for participatory housing in the UK and beyond. These tactics are methodological, they are actions, they are ways of working with the state whilst at the same time they also co-opt its structures and processes. Like the *space of negotiation*, through which these tactics operate, and like Co-PLAN's methods described above, they are context dependent – they will operate differently across diverse institutional and geographical contexts and so are general enough to be reinterpreted and translated.

Whilst I use the term *tactics* in this section, I move beyond a conceptualisation of tactics as *induced* and *catalytic*, as I discussed in Chapter 3, which draw upon De Certeau's (1980 [2011]) concept of tactics akin to 'coping mechanisms' - the ways that citizens negotiate the state (and the street) in a daily, often make-do manner. Instead the tactics that I describe in this section are more considered, *more consciously* tactical. Furthermore, they are ways of working *with* the state, not outside of it, as De Certeau's tactics.

However, De Certeau's characterisation of tactics is still useful here. For him, the tactic is connected to the manner in which opportunities are seized: "a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'. Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities'" (1980 [2011]: xix). Tactics are "clever tricks", "'hunter's cunning', manoeuvres", "lucky hits". They have a degree of plurality and creativity to them. Yet they arise and are formed through situations of constraint (what De Certeau calls 'strategy'), but whilst "strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces, when those operations take place,… tactics can only use, manipulate and divert these spaces" (1980 [2011]: 30). A tactic is thus a reaction to living in "technical systems" in which people are increasingly constrained, where the only option

available to them is to outwit the systems, to "pull tricks on them" (1980 [2011]: xxiv).

De Certeau states that the individual must detach themself from the strategy (the institution/system), instead of working within it. But the tactics that operate through the *space of negotiation* attempt to simultaneously work within, as well as manipulating the institutional context, by highlighting its ambiguities, shadows and deviations. Like De Certeau's tactics, they may take advantage of immediate opportunities, seized "on the wing", yet at other times they may be more planned, more thought out, *more tactical.* Furthermore, De Certeau's tactics are not locally rooted, whereas the tactics that I am proposing, like the *space of negotiation* which they operate through, are formed through a particular institutional context (which is, of course, always in flux).

In constructing a methodological typology for the tactics that operate through the *space of negotiation* I use the terms, *ambiguity, subversion, co-option* and *evasion.* These are tactics that may be used together or alone, and may be more or less important at different stages of a project, depending on what is required and what opportunities arise through the context.

Firstly, the *ambiguity* within the state must be highlighted and capitalised upon, which is always "tensely held between the immediate interest of capital accumulation and the long-term need for social stability" (Fiori and Ramirez, 1992: 29). It must not be forgotten that the state is both support and control mechanism, both protector and oppressor, both market and social actor (Fiori and Ramirez, 1992). This contradictory character is also found in citizens' differential relationship to the state, how they simultaneously reject and protect it, (as I stated in Chapter 3 with regards to how people defend the welfare state at the same time as being subject to its constrictive modes of governmentality), or in the way that local authority departments and officers work in opposing

ways (which can be seen in the conversation above between the housing officer and the senior surveyor). Participatory housing practitioners/groups should actively *highlight* and *work* these ambiguities, by, for instance, playing different state actors off against each other or, in a less agonistic manner, advocating for social and educational value as opposed to merely economic value in housing projects, thus questioning the real values and aims of the state.

This approach may additionally include the *co-option* and *subversion* of the state and/or capitalist structures – using and/or appropriating the resources, knowledge, language, imagery or methods of these institutions in order to oppose them. This form of *co-option* and *subversion* can be seen in Co-PLAN's use of electoral platforms and media campaigns, or in the Protohome project, when we capitalised on, and used the knowledge and support of local housing officers, whilst at the same time publishing articles in our publication which directly critiqued the very structures and (public-private) housing projects that they invested so much time and public money into. Furthermore, these practices are embedded in the very nature of showcasing a collaboratively built house in public (as I discuss below), which subverts the commercialisation of housing and the show-home 'ideal'.

Lastly, and this may be particularly needed when the state is unwilling to collaborate, is corrupt, in disarray, or when democratic culture is truly failing, is *evasion* of the state - using practices that slide under the state's radar. This can be seen in the development of Bathore when migrants, on a large scale, took advantage of a period of political and legal turmoil (see Figure 42). These transgressions or moments of *evasion* may also be heightened to a point of *militant refusal to co-operate* with the state, which can be seen in the violent protests that ensued in Bathore when the state began demolishing houses in the neighbourhood.

None of these approaches hold primary significance. Each will be differentially important depending on the context, informed by the particular style of political institution, which, as I stated above, is always in flux. Furthermore they may also be learnt through testing and action. Whilst sometimes they may be planned, at other times they will be responsive to the changing conditions and opportunities that present themselves at any given moment.

Figure 42: A newspaper clipping reporting the protests in Bathore in 1995.

Yet in order to monopolise the ambiguities within the state infrastructure and to co-opt and subvert state structures, housing practitioners must first 'know' the institutions of governance by undertaking fine-grained analyses of them - specifically their decision-making frameworks, how they allocate resources and assessing the main drivers of urban development processes. It is thus as Sewell argues: "Agency arises from the actor's knowledge of schemas" (1992: 20). This may involve profiling council officers - understanding what their roles and responsibilities are in order to navigate the vast expanses of the local authority, understanding the relationships between departments, and what their priorities and targets are, to comprehend what Chatterton calls the "clear pecking order"

(2015: 42), and having working knowledge of mainstream policy approaches (Pieterse, 2008). Furthermore, as state services are externalised, as I stated above, it is increasingly important to understand the *relationships of dependency* between public, private and third sector institutions, especially if participatory housing groups are to work across sectors. For Pieterse (2008), once we know the local institutions of power and their everyday operational processes, we can then *intervene and co-opt resources from the state*. Yet in recognition that the state has an ever-changing character, this analysis should take place in a cyclic fashion, repeatedly re-analysing, re-framing and re-ordering the relationship between the practitioner/group and the state. However, knowing the state also means conceptualising it not only as an *institution*, but also as a *set of social relations* (Mitchell et al., 1979), as I conceptualised above. As I stated, as soon as the state is understood as such, opportunities for infiltration, and thus change, transpire.

6.5.3 Becoming visible

Figure 43: A community barbeque at Protohome. *(Source: John Hipkin)*

Another powerful route into advocating for participatory housing approaches is to use what Appadurai (2002) terms "the politics of visibility" to counteract the invisibility of the many informal migrants on Tiranë's margins or the many homeless people sleeping on friend's sofas, on roundabouts, in doorways and underpasses in Newcastle.

Figure 44: Events, talks, exhibitions and artist residencies at Protohome and asking the public to 'have their say' on housing issues. *(Source: John Hipkin and Harriet Plewis)*

We can see this strategy in Co-PLAN's various media campaigns, urban forums and political platforms, which not only brought the issue of informality into the centre of the political debate but also offered a platform through which Bathore's residents could make demands and claims on the local state. We used a similar strategy in the Protohome project. Once constructed the building was open to the public for 11 weeks and hosted a range of events, including forums, talks, workshops, performances, artist residencies and film screenings, which examined the themes of the project - homelessness, participatory housing approaches and the politics of land and development. This space also hosted the documentation of the project through film and photography as well as offering a space in which the public could contribute to this discussion. In a targeted way, we wanted to use these events to challenge mentalities concerning homelessness and the homeless 'subject' and what capabilities lie within these individuals/groups (see Figure 44).

The impact of such an approach was multi-scalar. Whilst many members of the general public came to events, also present were housing, planning and architecture professionals, house-builders and developers, council officers and academics. Protohome thus became an important space of advocacy. Working with two housing officers at Newcastle and Gateshead Councils I organised a workshop specifically for council officers on participatory approaches to housing. Furthermore, the Protohome group presented the project on two occasions, first at a public forum about participation in housing, and second at an event organised by the HCA and its North East Community Led Development Network, in which the group spoke about their experience of the project alongside an HCA regional director and the deputy head of housing for the Greater London Authority. This kind of self-representation is a core principle of Participatory Action Research because it can subvert existing hierarchical structures about 'legitimate' knowledge and experience. It offers 'official recognition' in the same manner that the visit from the President of the

World Bank in Bathore or the political platforms that Co-PLAN organised did. Multi-scalar impact was thus a key driver of the Protohome project.

Figure 45: Members of the Protohome group presenting at an event on participation in housing and MP Chi Onwurah speaking at an event on the politics of land and development.

But beyond these events, the fact that Protohome, although a test, a prototype, was a tangible, physical example of participatory housing, highlighted in itself, just by being there, in situ, what can be done with a limited budget, limited time and using the skills of amateur builders. The importance of *seeing* for members of the public and more targeted individuals/groups was vital for the impact of this project. Instead of presenting plans or reports, building a useable building provided a stark opportunity for visitors to think beyond mainstream housing approaches and to appreciate the technical and creative competencies of homeless people. These tactics can thus be a vital tool in the creation of new housing precedents and the collapsing of embedded perceptions.

Appadurai (2002) discusses an alliance between three grassroots-led NGOs based in Mumbai (SPARC, an NGO formed by social work professionals to work with problems of urban poverty, the National Slum Dwellers Federation and Mahila Milan, an organisation focused on women's issues in relation to poverty) who use housing exhibitions, designed and built by the poor, to challenge deeply embedded institutional knowledge structures. He states that these actions turn "the survival tactics and experiments of the poor into sites for

policy innovations by the state, the city, donor agencies and other activist organisations" (2002: 33-4) and suggests that this may subsequently invite risk-taking by state officials, "allowing the boundaries of the status quo to be pushed and stretched" creating "a border zone of trial and error, a sort of research and development space within which poor communities, activists and bureaucrats can explore new designs for partnership" (2002: 34). Furthermore, as I stated above, the housing exhibition itself is also a process of subversion. By employing (and creatively high-jacking) the form of the 'show-home' to highlight issues of homelessness and housing crisis, the 'house' is not only a visual form but also a *political* form through which knowledge and new housing precedents are co-produced, thereby challenging hierarchical and expert-dominated knowledge networks.

The tactics used by both Co-PLAN and also in the Protohome project thus tentatively highlight the various mechanisms and deliberate actions through which participatory housing practitioners may open up spaces within local institutional structures to forge new value systems and new methodologies of working, whilst also consciously working against the grain of mainstream housing practice.

6.6 Conclusion

Although this chapter has examined the risks and difficulties of working with local institutions of power and has highlighted how cause and process may be co-opted, I have also highlighted, through examining how Co-PLAN situated themselves in between the state and the local community, how a *space of negotiation* might be opened up and practiced. As a result, this chapter has tended to my fourth research question that asks: How might participatory housing practitioners/groups work institutionally, with formal mechanisms of power, such as the state and other agencies, to scale up participatory approaches, and what is at risk when they do so?

As I have highlighted, the *space of negotiation* is a relationship between groups, yet practiced as a form of agonistic pluralism, to work with and against formal institutions of power, to infiltrate, subvert and co-opt the state and its methods, whilst also highlighting its ambiguities. This requires participatory housing practitioners/groups to *know* the institutional arrangements of local government, and be sensitive to how governance is expressed and practiced in order to effectively highlight the ambiguities within it and therefore provide more routes for opportunities to come forth. Thus opening up the *space of negotiation,* as well as the tactics that operate through it, is vital if participatory (and other forms of community led) housing is able to be scaled up and replicated. Furthermore, I imagine that the *space of negotiation* could extend to be operated by *coalitions* of participatory housing practitioners/groups, to create networks of relationships between local authority departments and officers, as well as outside actors, like the third sector and other development/learning partners. There will, of course, be many dangers and risks for participatory housing practitioners/groups, as I have highlighted. Yet in working pluralistically, changing allegiances and tactics when needed and always looking for new 'opportunities' to take advantage of an emerging

situation to access finance, land and support, these risks may be mitigated. But this means being patient, particularly in a context of austerity, when time and money are lacking and pressures are high within local authorities. It also means taking the time to build up strong working relationships and to forge the *space of negotiation* also as a learning space – to use it to exchange knowledge with local authorities as well as to feed into their knowledge. This is a long, steady process but it is very necessary to build a strong and resilient *space of negotiation*. Furthermore, because the *space of negotiation* and the tactics that are employed through this are plural and contextually created (the form and use of them differing across space-time), they are designed to be universal tools and mechanisms.

Yet, as I state in Chapter 7, beyond the *space of negotiation* there is also a need to create on the ground networks of support and learning, between participatory housing groups, practitioners, activists and professionals - coalitions of support that are grounded simultaneously on a local, national and international level, which share concrete ideas and approaches but that also advocate for housing justice in a much broader and general sense. This returns me to the debate which I opened this thesis with – the need to enable a conversation into participation in housing which is able to be produced *in place* (and it matters where it is produced) but which can then be remapped and redrawn and applied to other, perhaps radically 'different' places (Roy, 2011). This imperative is not only about connecting diverse places together and learning across borders but it also aims to decentre knowledge production in housing. The conceptual and methodological framework that I have proposed in this chapter, whilst often risky and boring business, aims to enable those with the least power and influence to make tactical and pragmatic claims on space and resources.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Tomorrow we shall have to think up signs,
sketch a landscape, fabricate a plan
on the double page
of day and paper.

Tomorrow, we shall have to invent,
once more,
the reality of this world.

Octavio Paz, *January First* (Quoted in writer Jeff Young's poetic response to the event *Dwelling and its Discontents: Art, Home and Economy* at Protohome, 15th July 2016)

To conclude this thesis I first offer some general reflections on the context and process of the research, paying specific attention to the climate of austerity/scarcity and to the methodology of 'thinking and working between' two seemingly diverse sites. I then discuss the contributions that this research makes, through a consideration of the overall findings, and finally I examine opportunities for future research.

I began this research wanting to test how embedded and participatory practices of housing could be learnt and translated from Bathore, an informal community in Albania on the outskirts of Tiranë, to a group in housing need in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. In this process there have been many twists and turns, dead ends and reroutes, but the core purpose of this research has stayed the same. I spent over four months in Albania undertaking interviews in Bathore, an area that developed in the mid 1990s after the fall of Communism, due to a mass internal migration of people from the mountainous northern regions. Here I examined the house-building process as well as uncovered the methods and results of an upgrading programme with a local planning NGO

called Co-PLAN which involved the provision of physical infrastructure (roads, sewerage, electricity and water), as well as helping to improve social cohesion and community participation. In Newcastle I worked with Crisis, the national charity for single homelessness, and their members, all who have experience of homelessness, and alongside xsite architecture and TILT Workshop, a local art/joinery organisation, we trained members in joinery and design skills, and built a prototype house over the course of four months, entitled 'Protohome'. Protohome was temporarily sited in the Ouseburn area of Newcastle for 11 weeks and open to the public, hosting a range of events examining homelessness, participatory housing alternatives and the politics of land and development.

Initiating a project that attempts to learn and translate practices across such geographical distance and difference has been a challenge. It has meant that I, as the vector for this research and these stories, have been operating in a kind of *in between trans-space*, oscillating back and forth between contexts physically and mentally, and the format of the thesis has reflected this. Throughout this research I have utilised a translocal lens, so whilst the research is rooted in place, in locality, it also accounts for spaces as relational, as interconnected. So the research is at once located in the experience of people and place in Bathore and Newcastle, at the same time as being dislocated. In Chapter 2, I described this field of vision, this *between space,* and throughout this thesis I have highlighted moments of 'learning from'. This learning process has included both the *translation* of knowledge from Albania to the UK, such as my discussion of working pluralistically, both with and against formal institutions of power in Chapter 6, as well as the less discernible and more ambiguous *resonances of experience/understanding* between the two contexts, such as how social relationships were founded through participation in building for both groups, as I discussed in Chapter 5. The use of *translation* and *resonance* thus goes beyond urban comparison (McFarlane, 2011a; 2011b; 2010a; 2006;

McFarlane and Robinson, 2012; Robinson, 2011; 2005), which would use the data to examine points of similarity in order to back up certain claims. Whilst McFarlane (2011a; 2011b; 2010a; 2006) employs comparison in an expanded sense, as a mode of thought, to foster learning between different places, this research has actively sought to *test* how this learning process might be activated. As a result *translation* and *resonance* instead of *comparison* offers a way to *mobilise* and *test* learning, to productively seek out new methods of housing. However, this means that through a translocal lens I have been working between specificity and generalisability (Roy, 2011) - whilst this research is rooted in the empiric specificities of place, these specificities can also be uprooted, displaced and used for learning in radically different contexts in a much more general way.

In order to undertake this translocal learning process I have drawn upon post-colonial scholarship and have activated this through the philosophies and methodologies of Participatory Action Research (PAR). At their core, both of these theories/practices have an imperative to decentre knowledge production and to challenge power differences, whether these hierarchies occur locally, within small groups/communities, or globally, between north/west and south/east, or whether these power differences are at work through institutions, such as universities or governments. This research has attempted to undertake this decentring of knowledge not only through the translocal learning process (learning *from* east *to* west) but also through foregrounding a narrative of 'amateur' house-building, normally conceived in the UK as a 'professional' activity. Furthermore, the research has sought to conceptually and methodologically expand this activity to understand how it may be activated by those that are on the social or physical 'margins' of cities. This thesis thus questions who and where holds the 'authentic' knowledge in housing and urban development processes, and queries how dominant top-down, neo-colonial narratives may be challenged.

The wider political and economic contexts in which this research is situated has been an important component that has shaped this thesis. From the beginning this research aimed to 'speak to' the context, conditions and outcomes of austerity in the UK, and particularly how this has affected housing, with rising housing precarity and homelessness due to (localised) government cuts and welfare reform that have arguably been hitting the (northern) poor the hardest (IPPR North, 2016). Furthermore, through these changes, cuts and caps, the welfare contract between state and society is shifting (Flint, 2015). As I highlighted in Chapter 3, during the Protohome project through conversations with group members, I witnessed the new subjectivities of welfare, whereby responsibility is individualised, but at the same time welfare recipients seem increasingly 'governed' through meetings, appointments and checks. Protohome members spoke about their feelings of inadequacy, guilt and shame, at relying upon, and being a burden upon, the welfare state.

But in this research it is not only the UK which has been feeling the effects of constructed scarcity. In Albania it has been 25 years since the fall of Communism but the effects of structural adjustment policies imposed on the country by global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the 1990s, still have deep and wide-ranging effects. As a result Albania has suffered from a lack of welfare and service provision and high unemployment levels (particularly amongst its youth) (Pojani, 2013), as I highlighted in Chapter 2. Furthermore, it was arguably these mechanisms, which depleted jobs, infrastructure, education and services in the mountainous northern regions of the country that prompted the mass movement of people to Bathore and other locations in the south, thus partially causing informality into existence.

In highlighting these experiences of imposed scarcity I have also sought to employ these contexts to consider how certain housing typologies might emerge within conditions of scarcity. So whilst this research has sought to critique what, in Chapter 3 I termed 'constructed' scarcity in the form of austerity or structural adjustment, it also seeks other routes and other ways of thinking *through and beyond* austerity by using an expanded concept of 'scarcity' to create new approaches to housing no matter how tentative or small scale they might be. So I have employed the term 'scarcity' throughout this thesis, not only as a term that transcends space-time, which can be translated between the two contexts at the centre of this research, but also, unlike 'austerity', it offers an opportunity for a counter narrative. Whilst scarcity can be constructed (like austerity) it is simultaneously a condition of being in a world that is finite (Till, 2014). A discourse of scarcity can thus offer a counter to the hegemony of growth, and furthermore, unlike austerity, it is an account that may return agency to those that are the victims of austerity politics. This is central to my focus on *induced* and *catalytic agency* in Chapter 3. Here I discussed how *induced agency*, or coping mechanisms, may never move beyond momentary techniques of 'getting by' or 'making do'. Yet when agency is politicised and collectivised it can become *catalytic agency* which is able to make organised claims on space and resources, as in the case of Bathore. However, at the same time I have emphasised the tensions that scarcity as a productive discourse carries, as well as agency-centred accounts of self-help. But in Chapter 3 I discussed the 'attachments' people have for an increasingly malfunctioning and means tested welfare system (Berlant, 2011). I highlighted the understandable tendency to want (and to need) to protect the welfare state in a period in which it is being captured by the private sector. Furthermore, I highlighted that within housing, this is particularly understandable when social housing is increasingly at risk (see the proposed extension of the Right To Buy in the 2016 Housing and Planning Act which I discussed in Chapter 2), and has been residualised to the point that it is now widely seen as the tenure of last

resort (Forrest and Murie, 1988; 1983; Malpass, 1990; Malpass and Victory, 2010). However, at the same time, I have also highlighted the harm that is caused by memory, and by blindly yearning for a return of universal, state provided welfare, or a renewed social contract. As Berlant (2011) states, the social democratic promise of upward mobility and the 'good life' is now much removed, and to hope for its return is 'cruel optimism'.

Furthermore, I have also critiqued top-down approaches to housing, by highlighting how the public voice has been squeezed out of welfare provision. Conversely, I have sought to think beyond public (and private) sector provision of housing and have drawn on bottom-up approaches that have the user/resident at the centre of the design/build/management process. Yet I have also recognised that housing is bound up in many structuring forces, dependent as it is on access to land, finance and development support. Therefore throughout this thesis, and particularly in Chapter 6, I have sought an approach to housing which takes into account institutional structures and how these can be employed whilst also retaining user/resident control. Overall though, as I highlighted in Chapter 3, as social housing and other sources of security for low income groups are becoming increasingly residualised, and as housing becomes increasingly financialised and commoditised, there is an imperative to look for new visions for housing in the UK which have learning and capacity building at their centre. Furthermore, approaching this imperative through a translocal and participatory lens offers even more opportunities for the creation and testing of alternative scenarios for housing.

With these foundations in mind, below I examine the key points of learning that have emerged through this research.

7.1 Reflections

7.1.1 Participatory housing

I have attempted to define and test an approach to housing which I have termed 'participatory housing'. In recognition that there is a poverty of language to describe collaborative building processes, (for example, 'self-build' is a vague term meaning anything from the full design and build of a house to the mere definition of spatial layout, whilst 'self-help', in the UK, refers to the refurbishment of empty properties with people in need of a home and skills/education/employment opportunities), I have defined Protohome as a (prototype) participatory housing project. I have used this term to refer to the full build of a house by people that need a home and/or employment. It is also an ethical approach to housing in that it attempts to work within a relatively hierarchy free structure and looks to redistribute power and give wider access to resources for builders. As a result it is grounded within the ethics and practices of PAR, as well as a notion of *praxis*, whereby theory is grounded in practice. Thus participatory housing offers a *particular* opportunity to blur the distinction between the producers and consumers of housing by reconsidering the way that housing is designed and delivered.

In defining a new terminology for collaborative methods of design/construction in housing, my hope is that this gains credence, and becomes the foundation through which new community led approaches to housing, which have ethical processes of learning at their centre, come forth (see my discussion of participatory ethics in Chapter 2). Yet this is also in recognition that whilst interest in community led housing is increasing in the UK, it is often the preserve of those with the economic, social and knowledge capital (see my critique of the localism agenda in Chapter 3). And whilst academic and policy work has focused on the 'added value' of community based approaches (see Birchall, 1988; Chatterton, 2015; Gooding and Johnson, 2015; Jarvis, 2011;

Mullins, 2010; Parvin et al., 2011), the full realisation of this 'added value' is often lacking due to the already existing social, economic or knowledge capital of those involved (Barritt, 2012). Thus in mobilising the context of scarcity, particularly through the Albania study, this research has sought an approach to participation in housing that may provide more opportunities for those with less power and resources (whether this be time, money or knowledge) to get involved. This discourse is much needed if the full potential of community led approaches to housing is to be realised for people in all economic and social circumstances. I therefore hope that by creating a new typology for bottom-up, participatory approaches to housing which takes its philosophical, ethical and methodological influences from PAR, that much wider and deeper forms of added value can be highlighted, particularly for those in housing/employment need.

7.1.2 Praxis

Through PAR I have sought an approach to research that grounds theory in practice – praxis. This has enabled the impact of this research to be multi-scalar, involving not only individual and group empowerment, but also, through advocacy events at Protohome, stimulating a learning process for local housing officers, and other architecture, planning and housing professionals. The knowledge gained through Protohome has also fed into the Homes and Communities Agency's North East Community Led Development Network, as well as an All Party Parliamentary Group examining new sources of housing supply. As a result, in this research praxis is not just used as a way of grounding theory in practice, as stated above, but it is also about an attentiveness to knowledge sharing through the physical built form.

Challenging normative modes and methods of research and academic knowledge production was not the primary aim of this research, however this

became more central as the research process went on. Seeking an approach which tries and tests through a live build within a (non practice based) academic context, whilst innovative within the context of Geography, was not novel for me, coming from an arts-based background. However, using the physical act of building as an integral part of the research process – as a research *tool*, as opposed to just a tool for the dissemination of an idea or creative approach was. In this sense the research, (in a way that I have not had space to tend to fully here), engages with how a building, a creative artefact or a participatory process can be a research output in its own right. Protohome not only became a way of advocating for more participatory housing approaches on a public stage, as I highlight below, but it also became a way to advocate for more practice-led and creative approaches to research. Whilst this thesis has not engaged with the growing literature on creative geographies or the growing collaborations between geographers and artists (see Hawkins, 2013; Madge, 2014), there is certainly potential to speak to these discourses through the example of Protohome in the future.

7.1.3 Learning from

This research has attempted to conceptualise a translocal learning process that seeks to learn through difference, in line with my first research question: How can practices and processes of participation in housing/planning in Bathore, Albania 'travel' to a group in housing need in a period of scarcity? As I discuss below, this has not involved the research 'travelling back' to Albania, which may have triggered a knowledge exchange and thus a deeper learning process. Nevertheless, this research has gone some way to challenging and dislocating deeply embedded norms of (western) house-building which, in the UK, are much removed from the end user.

An active (trying and testing) translocal approach to the research has aided in remapping situated knowledges. In doing so I have highlighted that whilst knowledge is embedded within the culture and context of particular places, through tacit forms of knowing, learning and building (in) the city, as I examined in Chapter 4, these knowledges and practices can also be remapped onto new, entirely different contexts. As a result I have sought to learn from the 'unlikely' location of Albania and have highlighted that there is much to discover from such 'different' contexts. This focus on Albania was initially forged by a personal connection to the country, formed over many years, and my interest in Bathore was due to its central role in the vast urbanisation of post-communist Albania, as well as how Co-PLAN worked with the community to upgrade the area. However, it was also chosen in recognition that Albania is a country which has been much ignored in (post-socialist) academic discourse and beyond, in favour of countries with more routine and linear paths to Capitalism (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999; Hörschelmann, 2002; Horvat and Štiks, 2015; Pickles and Smith, 2005; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). Furthermore, with regards to housing, Albanian informality has seldom been a subject of attention in academic literature (but see Pojani, 2013).

As I highlighted above, in 'learning through difference' I have drawn on new urban geography in the field of comparative urbanism (McFarlane, 2011; Robinson, 2011; 2005). I have been particularly interested in how these discourses are grounded within a post-colonial imperative to geographically decentre knowledge production and to think and learn through perceived difference. This follows recognition that much policy mobility work is utilised in a neo-colonial way, whereby the direction of learning is nearly always from north/west to south/east often via 'packaged solutions' that are not locally specific (McFarlane, 2011a). Yet I have sought to move beyond these approaches in order to *actively mobilise* learning from east to west through a critical employment of PAR. I have activated this process through the use of

various analytical tools, such as foregrounding accounts of *translation* and *resonance* – highlighting that a certain plurality within the learning/translation process is required when undertaking translocal research in order to work in between the general (for example, the connection I made between social isolation in Bathore and for the Protohome group members in Chapters 2 and 5) and the particular (for example my account of the core house and the Segal method of building in Chapter 4), and to be open to unlikely resonances. However, as I have found, there are inevitably difficulties and dangers to doing translocal research, as I highlighted in Chapter 2. Knowledge may be extracted in insensitive and unethical ways (Angeles and Gurstein, 2000), empirical specificities may be misread or misinterpreted – I may have unconsciously (or consciously) 'unseen' differences or divergences from the narrative that I want to present, and 'local knowledge' might be co-opted. Thus what is required is an ethic of learning whereby connections are not *forced.* Through my employment of *translation* and *resonance* I go some way to avoiding this. Furthermore, by utilising the theories and practices of post-colonialism and PAR, I have highlighted the importance of speaking *through* the partiality of my perspective and being awake to power differences between groups and across geographical distance and difference, as I highlighted in Chapter 2.

7.1.4 Convivial housing

Regardless of the difficulties and dangers within practicing translocal research, the need to unlearn and relearn normative methods of thinking about, designing and building housing is pressing. My second research question highlighted this imperative by asking: What new building processes may emerge through a process of travel/translation which are participatory and have learning at their centre? As a result, in relationship to the aforementioned need to think beyond the residual state of social housing, Chapter 4 proposed an alternative framework for building housing and planning cities. In doing so I

critiqued the de-politicisation of development, the city as a 'growth machine' (Molotch, 1976), as 'entrepreneurial' (Harvey, 1989; Ward, 2008; 2003), and specifically the increasing financialisation and commodification of housing which has transformed the imagination of 'home' into much more than just shelter but also a financial asset. Furthermore, I discussed the over-professionalisation of housing as a practice, and how strategies of exclusion and closure are often used by local authorities and their development partners to keep out public opinion (Said, 1993). However, in Chapter 6 I also highlighted the financial pressures that local authorities are under and their need to 'bring in the budgets' in a period of austerity and also in anticipation of being self-funded by 2020. As a result, the discussion of urban development is not without its ambiguities and there are no simple solutions to create processes of urban development that are more locally and democratically responsive.

Through the work of Jane Jacobs (1961 [1992]) and Richard Sennett (2006; 1970) I positioned my critique within 'open planning' traditions and I perceived of the house not only as a product but also as an object of learning, conceptualising this as a *building/learning-as-dwelling* process. Instead of understanding dwelling as something that occurs once the house is built, I have emphasised an expanded version of dwelling that means to build, to construct as well as to preserve and care for (Ingold, 2000; McFarlane, 2011a). Dwelling in this sense also has connections to how I understand this research as praxis – conceptualising housing as participatory and grounded. In considering housing as a 'verb' (Turner, 1977), as an active word, I foregrounded what it *does* in people's lives, how it connects to the social and cultural relations of household economies (as I stated in Chapter 4 in relation to the vernacular and the temporally and spatially distanciated learning of building traditions in Bathore), processes of sociality (as I examined in Chapter 5), or how it can be a catalyst for political legitimacy or recognition of the 'informal' or homeless 'Other' (as I

highlighted in Chapter 6). Conceptualising the house as a process creates more possibilities for learning, and also for more flexible, tacit, creative and autonomous forms of design/build, whereby the thinking and the doing are not separate (Ingold, 2000; Plumb, 2008). When connected back to a discourse of scarcity and the 'degrowth' agenda (Bendell, 2016; D'Alisa et al., 2014), there is a real need to expand the conceptualisation of housing and rethink it as a learning praxis, and in doing so, to bring forth more flexible, incremental and convivial forms of housing which make use of affordable, simple components and tools (Brand, 1994; Illich, 1973; Till and Schneider, 2007). This is a concept of housing which connects to material, economic and ecological scarcity, and whilst in this thesis I did not discuss in detail design in conditions of scarcity, or the political ecology of housing, these constitute a highly important area that requires more research (see Till, 2014; Till and Schneider, 2012).

7.1.5 Social learning

As I stated above, conceptualising housing 'as a verb' opens up potential for individual and group flourishing through the building process. As a result, the third research question asked: What is the connection between participation in housing and the creation of social ties? This thesis has thus traced how social relationships may be founded through embedded processes of participation and through the very act of collaboratively building. In this sense co-production can be socially grounding. As I stated in Chapter 5, this may be particularly vital for those that may be socially or physically alienated or isolated on the margins of the city, such as Bathore's migrant community or Newcastle's homeless individuals. As a result I focused on how elements of care, solidarity and friendship can emanate from these processes, and that sociality in itself, as in Bathore, can open opportunities for challenging public perceptions of those peripherally located in the city.

In Chapter 5 I highlighted that a central issue in Bathore in the mid 1990s was social cohesion and this impacted the community's ability to organise and make political claims on space and resources in a systematic way and on a formal democratic stage. Whilst networks of *fis* (clan members) were integral to the settling process and created an almost instantaneous community, at the same time this created fear and distrust between neighbours from different *fis* and/or regions. So whilst physically living in proximity, they were psychologically removed from each other, building large fences around their properties, for protection and privacy, to keep out the unknown 'Other'. Yet I traced how, through embedded processes of participation and the creation of community based organisations (CBOs) in the participatory upgrading programme, Co-PLAN had some success in forming new networks of trust between neighbours and also between community members and local political institutions in order to make organised claims on urban space as well as to be recognised as 'formal' citizens.

Furthermore, in Newcastle I highlighted how slow processes of group formation and the building of trust through sharing stories and collective processes of recognition, created an ethic of care between people, which may be especially valuable for vulnerable or isolated individuals. In some cases a growth in confidence allowed group members to take control over their situations, as one member stated: "For me now it's about taking the reins back and I'm grateful for the way I am and I will always be grateful, and I need that control on a situation, and I think you lose it when you get into the system". Control over life choices may actively open up new avenues and offer a space to discuss futures and realistic aspirations. Furthermore, since the project ended, two members have entered paid work (one in construction), five members are now in sustained housing and one member has enrolled at college, stating, "I'm actually able to do… calculations and things I forgot. I forgot… what I was capable of doing." Thus for some members it was a learning process through

which self worth emerged - "It's showing me that I can do what other people are saying I can" - instead of feeling a burden on society, as one who is homeless, or living on benefits, or having health troubles, as another member stated: "Yesterday I went home and I was knackered and exhausted but I felt this new sense of 'I love myself, I value myself'".

These accounts highlight that embedded processes of co-production can offer a safe space for personal recognition and for social growth. But, as I highlighted in Chapter 5, these processes of sociality aren't without power interplays. In this research I have conceptualised power as an effect of social interaction, as something that is grounded, active and thus has certain felt and lived effects (Allen, 2003) and have analysed it in the empirics through this lens. Individuals can be awkward, argumentative, have opposing visions, thus participation can be an agonistic process (Miessen, 2010). As a result I critiqued Patsy Healey's (1997) approach to deliberative discourse within collaborative planning scenarios (which Co-PLAN was influenced by). Instead I highlighted through the empirical material from the Protohome project, that disagreement can be productive, it can bring forth a form of agonistic honesty – situations of potentially 'instrumental' power can be highlighted and thus (potentially) moved beyond. These processes of agonistic participation, of power in proximity (Allen, 2003), may also enable groups to 'know' each other better. Through this discussion I attempted to ground Chantal Mouffe (2000; 1992) and Markus Miessen's (2010) work on agonism within the often emotive and highly charged atmosphere of the group scenario.

7.1.6 Working with

The final research question asked: How might participatory housing practitioners/groups work institutionally, with formal mechanisms of power, such as the state and other agencies, to scale up participatory approaches to

housing, and what is at risk when they do so? This research has highlighted that for participatory housing projects in the UK that aim to work with potentially vulnerable individuals, there is a real need to engage with intermediary institutions; for example, in this project Crisis provided pastoral and learning support for participants, and Newcastle City Council helped acquire development support and access to land. Furthermore, their fields of knowledge and expertise also fed into the project. This inevitably raises some questions with regards to groups and communities having control and autonomy over the process and outcome. As a result, in Chapter 6 I highlighted the risks of 'working with' formal institutions of power and the dependencies inherent within this process. I discussed how values and processes may get co-opted, vision may get watered down and potentials for real empowerment of groups and individuals may be eclipsed in return for material support, and these risks may be even more present in conditions of scarcity. Thus relationships between groups/communities and local authorities could be potentially exploitative, with the power firmly in the hands of the authorities. In an austerity context this may be even more challenging, when local authorities are suffering from hugely decreased capacity (both financial and human) and thus may be less willing to support alternative, seemingly more 'risky' approaches to housing that go beyond the 'tried and tested' routes of working in partnership with large scale developers and volume house-builders.

In light of these potential issues, in Chapter 6 I set out an agenda for how participatory housing practitioners/groups might operate through what I termed a *space of negotiation,* which is a plural and pragmatic relationship between participatory housing practitioners/groups and local authorities. It is context specific and actor dependent, thus it is in flux. To illustrate the *space of negotiation* I examined Co-PLAN's practices of working both with and against local authorities, pluralistically, playing the politics of non affiliation, and I drew on Mouffe's (2000; 1992) work on 'agonistic pluralism' to do this. In creating a

pragmatic agenda for how participatory housing approaches could be extended, I also highlighted the certain *tactics* that may operate through the *space of negotiation* – tactics which highlight the *ambiguities* in the state, which *subvert* it, *co-opt* its resources and sometimes, when needed, *evade* it. This is therefore a politicised process of simultaneously 'working with and against' formal mechanisms of power. Whilst these approaches offer some methodological possibilities, there are still many barriers to extending participatory housing approaches that this thesis has not touched upon (as I highlight below). However my particular focus on praxis affords not only a practical, but also a conceptual ethical lens through which the *space of negotiation* might be catalysed.

7.1.7 Making visible

This research highlights that practicing, doing and, importantly, *showing* can be very powerful tools to advocate for new participatory housing precedents on a public stage. Being visible through a public-facing prototype house, or through the media campaigns, public forums and election debates that Co-PLAN employed during the participatory upgrading project in Bathore, as I discussed in Chapter 6, can challenge policy and institutional mentalities concerning 'viable' housing models, confront perceptions of homelessness or informality and bring forth the voice of the 'Other' and have this voice speak to those in positions of political power. These can have transformational potential on a number of scales, from the individual to the institutional, whilst at the same time bringing the skills and capacity of seemingly 'illegal' or homeless individuals to the fore, thereby also challenging expert-dominated claims to knowledge. As a result, one housing officer from Gateshead Council stated:

> "Protohome is providing timely intervention at a critical time when local authorities are reviewing the obstacles, opportunities and

> scope of the contribution of self-build to economic and housing growth. The range of discussion and events at Protohome are providing the right level of challenge and broadening thinking about self-build to encompass aspects of social regeneration and community sustainability and what approaches Councils could consider adopting to support growth of this sector. This includes thinking about land assembly, access to council functions and integration with housing and regeneration activities".

Thus employing public platforms can also bring together actors from many different sectors, as we did during the events programme at Protohome. This can help to scale up impacts and forge potential partners for further projects.

7.2 Futures

Notwithstanding these findings, there are questions raised by this thesis that have not been answered here – certain key areas that require more consideration and enquiry, including fruitful areas for future research, as I analyse below.

7.2.1 Participation

Whilst this research, and particularly the Protohome project, has been heavily influenced by PAR, due to the timescales involved in doing a PhD, but also due to the complex needs of the individuals that we were working with in Newcastle (and undertaking a project that could be dangerous), the process departed from the methodology of PAR. Whilst this was a reflexive process through which we as tutors were open to changing the course of action once it was in motion (which helped to accommodate unforeseen issues) and allowed group members to contribute to the overall direction of the process, in hindsight I feel that the tutors led the project too much. For example, I would have liked to integrate a full co-design process into the project, as well as have group members feed into the events programme. This, however, is less of a preference of mine and more directly about being able to achieve a process and outcomes that are more equitable, more participatory and more ethical. Ideally had the group members set the terms and boundaries of the research process as well as evaluate and decide on its dissemination, then a more collective (and perhaps critical) representation of the project may have come forth. Furthermore, through these processes there may have been more opportunities for a deeper learning process for members.

Inevitably participatory processes are not without their hierarchies. Moreover, as I have discussed in this thesis, it would be difficult and potentially risky (due

to the dangerous nature of building projects) for participatory housing to be void of hierarchies, especially when working with potentially vulnerable individuals. Furthermore, as I highlighted in Chapter 5, certain forms of hierarchy or authority can be productive. For example in Bathore's participatory upgrading project, the *kryeplakë* (elders – who were also the leaders of the CBOs) used elements of persuasion and authority to bring forth the participatory upgrading project. Whilst these tactics are instrumental and used from positions of power, this activated a process that has had lasting positive results for the community as a whole. And so certain modes of 'lateral' authority can trigger wider and deeper impacts, they can bring more people into a project, operating as receptors to dispense forms of wisdom (Allen, 2003: 58). As I highlighted, it is thus the *nature* of the hierarchical authority that is important – how open individuals in positions of authority are to succeed power to the wider group/community. Yet I still wonder what is at stake through such processes? Should we, as participatory practitioners, not be striving for *more* horizontal processes? Perhaps this is an enduring question of PAR. Yet I hope by calling attention to these various modalities of power and how they emerge in place, through actions and discourse, that participatory processes continue to be open to internal critique.

As I stated above, and in Chapter 6, there is a need to be awake to the many ways in which participatory processes and values may get co-opted by universities, agencies, the state and other institutions of power, in order to make sure that the wider cause of disrupting hierarchies does not get diluted. In particular there is a significant tension with regards to doing PAR or other forms of participatory work within an academic context which may expect particular outcomes at particular times, and in addition may not be familiar with the processes and ethics of PAR. As Pain et al. (2015) highlight, good co-production requires a long initial phase in order to embed relationships as well as processes of working. This is particularly vital in participatory housing

projects that have potential health and safety risks. Furthermore, slow burning projects may have more transformative potential and multi-scalar impacts, as opposed to time-limited projects, like the Protohome project. In addition, empowerment might be difficult to sustain through short term projects, people might fall back into old routines, when the project ends, or when the resources (whether this be people, skills or tools) are no longer available or present (Pain and Francis, 2003).

This discussion inevitably has implications for university research. Whilst universities and research councils are becoming more awake to the myriad of 'impacts' that stem from participatory research, which may be multi-scalar and may involve the creation of physical artefacts as opposed to just academic papers, there are still many barriers to doing work of this kind. The time and commitment needed often goes above and beyond regular academic work, having a commitment to many different individuals and organisations, not just to a university or research council. Furthermore, the products and impacts that result from participatory research, whilst varied and wide ranging (for example during the Protohome project we produced a housing prototype, an events programme, a publication, a website, a film and a report), pile on added pressure to already stretched academic workloads, meaning that as a practitioner-academic, you're either self exploiting or omitting certain aspects of your job (for me, during this research I was always on the academic back foot). Indeed, as I stated above, many of the issues with regards to the participatory process stem from these time pressures. Only when universities and research councils recognise the benefits of slow (yet urgent) work will true multi-scalar and multi-dimensional impact come forth from academic work (mrs kinpaisby, 2008: 296-7).

7.2.2 Travelling back

As I stated above, thinking between the two case studies was difficult and often disjointed. Instead of directly 'learning from', many of the elements that link the two studies emerge as *resonances of experience*. Learning through difference is tricky, and, as I stated in Chapter 6, participatory housing projects first need to be grounded within the particularities of place, in local issues and institutional arrangements (Pieterse, 2008). However, the use of non-local processes, methods and ways of thinking can help to broaden approaches, particularly in contexts of scarcity, by examining the material options amongst groups on the margins, such as Bathore's residents. Furthermore, creating international coalitions of housing activists, groups and communities could strengthen the case for more participatory forms of housing.

In the context of this research, I always hoped that the learning would 'travel back' to Albania. Instead of a one-way process of learning, I imagined it to be an *exchange* of knowledge and practices. For example, there may be points of learning for Co-PLAN in taking a more agonistic approach to collaborative planning, which could help to foreground the engrained power relations of gender and hierarchy that exist within Albanian communities, as I discussed in Chapter 5. Thus the sharing of ideas and practices could be a complementary, critical tool, but it could also have wider transformative potential through the creation of international networks of practitioners and activists striving for more participatory, and equitable, forms of housing. This could catalyse processes of mutual learning and provide opportunities for ideas and approaches to travel from place to place, from context to context, seeking to share experiences rather than impose universal standards (Pieterse, 2008).

This concept is central to Routledge's (2003; 2000) 'convergent spaces' – how spaces of communication, information sharing, solidarity, coordination and resource mobilisation can be forged globally. These spaces are found in the

alliance of grassroots organisations (SPARC, Mahila Milan and the National Slum Dwellers Federation) that I discussed in Chapter 6, which highlights that when networked up, organisations and groups can become a powerful advocacy force on the national and international stage. Furthermore, the formation of networks/alliances can also trigger new processes of 'learning and exchanging between' (Appadurai, 2002).

7.2.3 Scaling up

Though it may be a difficult, long and slow process to bring forth new housing typologies, as I have described in this thesis, there are wider questions regarding how we might realise participatory housing approaches, given the financial pressures that councils are under and the power and influence that private developers and volume house-builders wield (as I highlighted in Chapter 6). These issues are difficult to surpass, and they are some of the reasons why real alternatives to mainstream housing approaches are so difficult to bring forth in the UK. Whilst community led housing is on the agenda of the national government, pilot projects are often difficult to replicate or scale up (see the example of LILAC in Leeds (Chatterton, 2015)).

So what needs to be put into place in order to scale up these approaches and create real, workable participatory housing projects? Whilst I discussed how participatory housing groups and practitioners may work with (and at the same time against) institutions of power in Chapter 6, I didn't discuss the many other barriers to bringing forth participatory housing as a new form of community led housing, particularly in urban areas. Below, I set out these issues and potential opportunities.

Land is perhaps the key barrier to initiating participatory and community led housing. Too much land is packaged up as development sites or 'banked' by

large scale house-builders and developers who have significant buying power over smaller investors. Therefore it is a struggle to compete for sites. Furthermore, land is a particular issue because there is a constrained supply of it (particularly in cities), and in the north-east of England there are also some specific problems with regards to land remediation, due to the vast expanses of ex-industrial land. This means that whilst land is often available (particularly local authority land), the remediation costs would be far too high for a local community housing group to afford. However, there are still some potentials. Community led housing groups could make use of small or difficult sites that are not attractive to developers, for example the Segal method can be used on steep sites, as in *Walters Way* in Lewisham (see Figure 32). Groups could also use local authority land. In order to enable this, local authorities would need to map all available small sites on the brownfield register (five units plus) in the city (indeed some local authorities have already started mapping these) (Parvin et al., 2011). Furthermore, self-provided housing could be recognised as a separate class of development in local authorities' Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA) and they could then identify a *proportionate* allocation of land for self-provided housing. Once identified, the local authority could lease the site to a group for participatory housing. The lease would however need to be long enough for the group or organisation to acquire a mortgage. If participatory and other community led forms of housing were seen as part of 'affordable' housing supply numbers then this could be included within a Section 106 agreement – whereby part of a larger development site could be gifted or offered at a reduced price, or potentially leased, to a participatory housing group (see how Arun District Council has achieved this by changing their planning policy (Arun District Council, 2010)). Furthermore, self-build zones could be established (as in Almere, Holland (Feary, 2015)) on under-used agricultural land or ex-industrial sites (Parvin et al., 2011).

At a time when funding is limited and when banks and building societies are extremely cautious in their lending, finding the finance needed for participatory housing projects may be difficult. However there are new financial products and funds available, such as those on offer from Locality (www.locality.org.uk), Power to Change (www.powertochange.org.uk), the Community Land Trust Network (www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk) or local authorities (for example through council mortgages or pump prime funding) or from ethical banks such as Charity Bank (www.charitybank.org), Ecology Building Society (www.ecology.co.uk) or Triodos Bank (www.triodos.org.uk). Groups could also work in collaboration with housing associations, charities or other agencies that have a commitment to the social benefits that participatory/community led housing can offer. Ultimately if community led forms of housing are going to increase in scale and scope, setting up a local development fund specifically for this is needed. Therefore instead of the piecemeal approach to funding which we currently have in the UK there is a requirement for long term, dedicated funding and capital finance to support projects.

The complexity of organising and project managing a workable participatory/community led housing project requires that support mechanisms are in place to connect groups to professional advisors (in, for example, design, build, planning and finance). This may require a local network of professionals, organisations and peer-to-peer support mechanisms which may aid in the process and help to share outcomes and models to spread knowledge of new approaches. Furthermore, if cities are looking to strategically grow their community led housing sectors then specific organisations dedicated to advocating for and supporting this are necessary (see Leeds Community Homes (www.leedscommunityhomes.org.uk)). There is a need too, for political advocacy for participatory/community led housing at a high level, ideally through an MP or a Cabinet Member. These relationships of course, may be full of tensions and ambiguities and so it is important to consider and build these

through the framework of the *space of negotiation* in order to avoid co-option, as I stated in Chapter 6.

There is a need for new housing typologies which are affordable, and which also take into account material scarcity (Till, 2014). Groups could 'design-down' using affordable, simple and flexible systems of building, like the Segal Method, or even more efficient 'flat pack' approaches (for example the *WikiHouse* (www.wikihouse.cc)). However, the importance of learning, training and collaborative methods of building should not be neglected, particularly for participatory housing that seeks to work with those in housing and/or employment need.

More research is needed to examine how participatory housing might fit within the current community led housing landscape. There is a growing literature, both academic and policy focused, on community led forms of housing which could feed into this (see for example, work on Community Land Trusts (Moore and McKee, 2012), co-housing (Chatterton, 2015; Jarvis, 2015; 2011), self and custom build housing (Benson, 2015; Parvin et al., 2011) self-help housing (Moore and Mullins, 2013; Mullins, 2010; Teasdale et al., 2011) and housing co-operatives (Birchall, 1988; Clapham and Kintrea, 1992). Whilst these approaches won't solve the 'housing numbers game', as they aren't methods for mass house-building (yet), they do provide alternative visions of housing in a period of increasing housing financialisation and commodification, as well as the increasing residualisation of social housing. Providing alternative frames of value for housing, conceptualising it 'as a verb' (Turner, 1977), as a catalyst for human flourishing through processes of ethical learning, could mean that participatory housing has the potential to play an integral role for those in most housing need. This, therefore, would be the main contribution for participatory housing within wider community led housing debates. These approaches won't

and can't be initiated by the state - if they are then autonomy is at risk. They can only come from politicised grassroots action.

Beyond the community led housing literature, whilst a debate into housing in conditions of *real* scarcity is currently taking place, and is often framed around the effects of austerity (Flint, 2015; Manzi, 2015; McKee, 2015), privatisation of social housing (Forrest and Murie, 2014; Malpass and Victory, 2010), housing unaffordability (Dorling, 2014; Madden and Marcuse, 2016; Meek, 2014) and state sponsored gentrification (Porter and Barber, 2006; Watt, 2009), there is a real need for this debate to both critique *and* propose, to bring forth new housing typologies and ways of physically creating these models. As I have stated in this thesis, this productive discussion could be catalysed by examining the potentials for learning from radically different contexts, which have been dealing with their own forms of scarcity over long periods of time. However, this discussion should also involve a critical examination of the future of the welfare state, and particularly social housing. Honesty within this debate is essential. So whilst this debate might examine historical mutualist approaches to welfare (for example) (as in my discussion of the origins of housing associations in Chapter 6) and critique the increasingly residual state of current social housing sector, it must also project forward. This will, of course, involve a bit of dreaming, a bit of creativity and, most importantly, a lot of hope. However it is important that these new housing typologies are grounded within the realistic possibilities of place. Whilst I have outlined the many difficulties of producing more participatory housing alternatives, especially when power and money may be lacking, I still believe that these difficulties can be overcome, and I hope that this thesis has provided some signs on a route to new housing realities.

In conclusion, central to both case studies I have discussed in this thesis is the

sense in which people value things that they have taken a hand in building, running, and maintaining themselves. The 'pragmatic anarchist' and housing activist Colin Ward, stated that, "People care about what is theirs, what they can modify, alter, adapt to changing needs and improve for themselves. They must be able to attack their environment to make it truly their own. They must have a direct responsibility for it" (1982: 72). Participation can thus lead to a fuller sense of ownership. Yet beyond this, the co-production of housing and organised forms of participation in the urban environment can help communities intervene into institutions of political power and enable them to advocate for wider access to resources, and importantly, as in Bathore, to be recognised as 'formal' urban citizens. It can also catalyse a social learning process, where mutual processes of learning, confidence building and self-representation create new life trajectories. By conceptualising housing as a participatory and translocal learning process there is an opportunity to unlearn and relearn the ways that cities are designed and built, particularly in the UK, where urban development is so often not locally embedded. This imperative may become particularly important in future conditions of real or constructed scarcity. So whilst individuals and communities shouldn't be turning inwards, through a participatory and translocal approach to housing there is a chance to re-root and dislocate at the same time, forging new opportunities to learn through difference.

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